

271 Grétry

disques

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disques

FOR AUGUST 1931

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H. ROYER SMITH COMPANY, PUBLISHERS, PHILADELPHIA
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ANYONE who, like the recently famous Mr. Gene Tunney, has read a book, and more especially those hardy souls who, having found the experience thrilling, tried it again, must be thoroughly familiar with the fact that literature is most abundantly rewarding and pleasurable when read alone. Complete, undisturbed privacy, indeed, is one of the prime requisites for profitable (not to be confused with what is commonly called educational and uplifting) reading. The presence of anyone, no matter how sympathetic, how well-liked, how understanding, is bound in one way or another to be distracting. If the person is a good friend, interesting and highly esteemed, then the temptation to talk, to comment, to exchange views, to argue, constantly pops up. Inevitably the effect of the printed page is spoiled. If the person is not a good friend and not so well-liked, then his or her presence is disturbing and irritating, and you somehow resent the intrusion. The effect of the printed page is again destroyed. Only if the person is entirely colorless, insignificant and utterly quiet is it at all possible to be wholly unconscious of his or her presence. But not many of us know many such persons, and so they need not be taken into account here. We often hear of—and per-

haps occasionally meet—certain weak and flabby people who make no visible impression wherever they go (the people, perhaps, who have not availed themselves of the priceless wonders hinted at in the magazine advertisements offering to provide for a small sum the secrets of acquiring a magnetic personality), but the mere fact that they are so weak and flabby is to be held against them.



Many of life's finer moments are best enjoyed in the company of friends or a friend. But there are pleasures equally fine, equally moving and equally stimulating that can best be enjoyed alone — that, indeed, must be enjoyed alone if they are to be fully experienced. One of them is literature. Another, though for obvious reasons it is still insufficiently realized, is music. The importance of listening to music alone has been insufficiently realized because, until comparatively recently, it has been next to impossible for most people to listen to music alone. Conditions of musical performance imposed on us the necessity of hearing music in gloomy or flamboyant concert halls and opera houses, sitting in uncomfortable seats, surrounded by people who irritated, disgusted or amused us. Instead of listening to music when the mood seized us, we had to try to put our-

selves in the mood—not always an easy undertaking and frequently a downright impossible one. All of these factors made it difficult to pay full attention to the music; much of its charm and significance was necessarily lost. Getting the most out of music is not—Professor William Lyon Phelps of Yale notwithstanding—just a matter of earnest, patient listening, any more than getting the most out of literature is just a matter of earnest, patient reading. That may be one reason why so many people, anxious to obtain something they vaguely call “culture,” buy the various outlines so eagerly, and then, finding that the advertisements were genially misleading and that thorough knowledge of any subject can only be obtained through painful labor, toss them disgustedly into the scrap basket and return to the radio, cards and the newspapers. At any rate, listening to music in a concert hall full of people is not always an unalloyed delight. We endured and still do endure these conditions because we had and have to in order to hear the music. We either had to make the best of these conditions or do without the music. It is surely no small tribute to music that, in spite of all these adverse and discouraging handicaps, it has survived and still remains very much alive and bouncing.



The pleasures of solitude have been celebrated times innumerable, and with high eloquence, and the causes thereof have been assiduously explained by philosophers, poets and other such doctors of the delicate and troublesome thing called the human soul. Too much solitude, to be sure, like too much of anything, is just as bad as too little solitude. As with all things, there must be a felicitous balance. It is good now and then to hear music in the concert hall. To argue the contrary is by no means our intention. We simply wish to point out the fact, no doubt very obvious to most imaginative and sensitive music lovers, that often a great deal more satisfaction can be derived from music heard alone than can be derived from music heard under the depressing circumstances that commonly attend most actual performances. Many fine uses have been ascribed to the phonograph, and its virtues have been sung with constantly increasing enthusiasm during the past couple of years. But one of its salient advantages, and one that too often escapes adequate notice, lies in the fact that it enables us to hear the world's greatest music by ourselves, without distracting companions (and even the best of companions are distracting, and fortunately so, for therein lies their chief charm and attraction) to get between us and the music. Alone with the phonograph, all unpleasant externals are removed: the interpreter has been disposed of; the audience has been disposed of; the uncomfortable concert hall has been disposed of. You are alone with the composer and his music. (And the needle scratch, some may impolitely add. But these things are being taken care of gradually, and at any rate they have been so minimized recently that they are not nearly so objectionable as, say, a neighbor at the concert hall who reveals his unhappiness in the immemorial way of bored and inconsiderate people.) Surely no more ideal circumstances could be imagined. Under such conditions only the finest of music can survive. Things like Ravel's *Bolero*, which depend so largely for their effect upon the factor of the audience, shortly become ridiculous—at least, after a hearing or so. *Bolero* is, or perhaps was, plausible and exciting in the concert hall mainly because of the accompanying spectacle of two thousand ninnyhammers perched expectantly on the edges of their seats, their faces shining with the honest happiness of people who know exactly

what they are expected to do and intend shortly to do it: in this case leap from their seats, pound their palms, and thus mildly astonish the puffing musicians and gratified conductor. But there is other music besides Ravel's clever and sometimes effective *Bolero*, and the pleasures it affords in the privacy of one's home are so keen and moving that the superficial stimulus imparted by things like the *Bolero* can readily be dispensed with.



Unimaginative people, of course, tend to grow uneasy and unhappy alone. They need to be with friends constantly, or else they grow uncomfortable and melancholy, and so succumb in short order to alcohol, marriage, clubs or maybe only New Humanism. But persons with a healthy imagination, persons strong enough to be self-reliant and self-sufficient, don't need companionship in their enjoyment of the arts. These people, one suspects, will be unceasingly grateful to the phonograph if only for the reason that it affords them an opportunity now and then to retire within themselves and listen, undisturbed, to what one or another of the reputable composers has to say.



Last month attention was called in this place to the obvious need for a long-playing record. Such a disc, it was pointed out, would not only tend to revive interest in the phonograph and so provide the stimulus so urgently needed by the industry; it would also add immeasurably to the purely musical value of records. That a record capable of playing four times as long as the ordinary disc may soon be a reality is indicated by the fact that on the morning of July 15 the Philadelphia Orchestra assembled on the stage of the Academy of Music and there, under the direction of Leopold Stokowski, recorded the complete Beethoven Fifth Symphony—on one 12-inch record, two movements to a side. The members of the orchestra, already thoroughly astonished at being called upon to play before the microphone in July, were even more surprised when the engineers allowed them to play each

(Continued on page 249)

SUBSCRIPTIONS, INDEX AND BOUND VOLUMES

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CODE

The first letters in the record number indicate the manufacturer and all records are domestic releases unless the word **IMPORTED** appears directly under the number: B-Brunswick, C-Columbia, D-Decca, EB-Edison-Bell, FO-Fonotopia, G-National Gramophonic Society, HO-Homocord, O-Odeon, PA-Parlophon, PD-Polydor, R-Regal (English), and V-Victor.

Polyphonophobia

By WINTHROP PARKHURST

The mere name of a disease, as every physician has discovered to his profit, is often much more imposing than all its symptoms. The thing that breaks out in the doctor's vocabulary, in many cases, shames the thing that has broken out in the patient. Such a name and such a disease is the heptasyllabic monster polyphonophobia. It hints darkly at disorders of an alarming nature. It suggests malignant complications which would seem to include frothing at the mouth and glassy eyes as a stark minimum. To be told that one is a victim of polyphonophobia, to be told that one is actually a polyphonophobiac, is to be thrown into that state of frozen fear which follows a diagnosis of rabies.

Actually, the fear of polyphonic music is perfectly normal; and polyphonophobia, which is the name of that fear after it has been expanded by the lungs of a lexicographer ("the fear of many sounds" is its literal meaning), is hence only the cosmic title of a common ailment. All musicians, to a greater or smaller extent, suffer from it. The average music-lover, the average concert-goer, the average phonograph-owner, is thus in no unusual condition: he has plenty of company the world over. For the human race is constitutionally lazy. It is hard work, listening to polyphony. Therefore, given the human race as it is constituted, at least one of its numerous ills was inevitable.

The first point to be made regarding this malady, consequently, is that it covers the face of our planet. It is as universal as laziness, which it springs from. If misery indeed loves company, as it is said to do, then sufferers from polyphonophobia are happily circumstanced in being able to gratify their amorous desires, not only at all times but in all directions.

So much, by way of a *Vorspiel*, calls for emphasis. All of us are congenitally lazy. And all of us, by that same token, instinctively avoid those arduous tasks which the mind and ear are called upon to shoulder by the art of counterpoint.

II

But there is more than native sloth in the picture.

As I have said, music-lovers are prone to avoid contrapuntal works because, being human beings, they instinctively dodge the extra burden which such works lay upon them, mentally and aurally. The average music-lover is exactly the same as the professional musician, and the professional musician is exactly the same as the average music-lover, in instinctively liking to take things easy from dawn to midnight. However, while laziness is one, it is not by any means the only, causal factor: genuine timidity is also responsible. In other words, as I now make bold to assert, music-lovers are prone to avoid contrapuntal works because, in addition to being lazy, they are frightened; they are frightened by the dazzling brilliance, the blinding intellectual radiance, which is said to inhere in the polyphonous art and to issue from it. Having been assured, from their childhood up, that contrapuntal compositions are flaming creations of a human mind which has been whipped into an incredibly high state of incandescence, music-lovers at large are duly terrified. Although they like brilliance of a modest sort in small quantities, they yet are

reasonably reluctant to lose their eyesight. In consequence, they behave as any normal person behaves when a hard job threatens to become a perilous enterprise. Simultaneously they duck the job and flee the enterprise. Deliberately as well as instinctively they avert their gaze from the transcendental glare which forms a traditional halo over the art of counterpoint. They sensibly shut their eyes to avoid blindness.

That the blinding magnificence of polyphonic writing scares off many auditors is lamentably certain. The precise number of those frightened auditors, and the exact distance they are scared off, are items of course which may be disputed. Different accountants will arrive at different estimates. Let us therefore be easy-going in this matter. Let us be statistically modest. Nay, let us pare down lamentable certainty to its preposterous minimum, affirming only that a single auditor, at one moment in the world's history, was scared off one inch from the art of counterpoint, and was propelled that humble distance by the advertised pomp and glory of polyphonic writing—what then? Nothing, musically, but this: a single auditor's musical experience was actually stunted, howsoever slightly, by a musical tradition that is vain, idiotic, baseless, ludicrous, and fraudulent.

How many music-lovers by actual count are turned into polyphonophobiacs by the scintillating marvels of polyphony? A multitude? A goodly company? A bare handful? One hesitates to reduce an emotional truth to a row of digits. Both the extent and the depth of the damage wrought are facts eluding the clumsy fingers of mathematics. I purposely refrain, therefore, from offering any precise estimate of that damage, although I deem it both great and continual. The evil with which I am primarily concerned, in other words, is not the immediate or direct consequence of a musical folly but that very folly itself in all its fondness. Otherwise expressed, I am attacking that form of polyphonophobia which manifests itself in the traditional reverence in which polyphonic writing is held by professional musicians, northward and southward from the equator. In fine, I rise to ask a blasphemous question: *Is polyphony really everything it is cracked up to be?*

III

The routine reply to such a question is in the affirmative. So nimbly does the word "Yes" leap to the lips of musicians the world over that it almost seems specially designed for that activity. The answer springs up like a jack-in-the-box when you press the question. Nevertheless, I deny its propriety. And I am the more vehement in my scorn of this stock answer in that, strangely enough, the automatic nature of such an answer is never admitted. Decade after decade, musicians lend their lips to the affirmative answer; decade after decade the word "Yes" pops out of their mouths when two slots in the sides of their heads receive the question "Is polyphony really everything it is cracked up to be?"; and I for one have grown impatient with this performance. I consider the answer erroneous, in the first place, when it is not surrounded with important reservations; and, in all other places, I resent its offensive air of self-confidence. Self-evident truths always offend me because no truth which I ever have met was self-evident.

Is polyphony really everything it is cracked up to be? Is there anything in this art of the independent motion of several voices which raises a polyphonic composition, instantly and automatically, above the level of a composition that is chordal

—or, to speak learnedly, that is homophonic? Forsooth, what unique and unapproachable virtue resides in this much-vaunted action of several voices? Writing for them, of course, is more difficult. Listening to them, of course, is more arduous. Juggling two balls is twice as hard as juggling one ball; watching four balls is twice as taxing as watching two balls. But wherein, save in the added intricacy and added labor, resides the superiority said to inhabit the lordlier accomplishment?

The æsthetic answer is a brief answer, namely, nowhere. In fine, polyphony is no whit superior to homophony. *Only if the tax placed upon composer and auditor determines the musical worth of any given composition can counterpoint be exalted to especial eminence. If musical worth is indeed established by this criterion, then the peculiar eminence of counterpoint is established; but on any other score it promptly vanishes, and the pomp attributed to polyphony is forthwith ended.*

For these words of musical blasphemy I expect a stoning. Indeed—so tremendously powerful is tradition and training—I find myself tempted to join the stoners. I am able to resist that temptation only because I refuse to allow a conventional attitude, based on a confusion of mental toil and tonal eloquence, to blandish my reason and to overcome it. Steeling my opinions against insidious folly, therefore, I reaffirm my statement that polyphonic music is raised above the level of homophonic music, instantly and automatically, only by virtue of the greater intricacy of the former; that this greater intricacy invites a correspondingly greater effort on the part of the auditor; and that that greater effort is the chief cause of the disease called polyphonophobia as it is the chief object of a sluggish race's veneration. On the one hand men fear toil, and hence avoid it; but on the other hand men worship toil, and hence are thrown into prostrate attitudes by examples of it. There, in one short sentence, is the situation.

IV

It is a situation which in one respect can not be remedied. Nothing can be done to make a polyphonic composition as easy to listen to as a homophonic. In the matter of complexity and difficulty, a canon cancrizans has the drop on a hymn tune, and will have it always. Consequently, no matter how noble the hymn or how trivial the canon in musical essence, the hymn, by virtue of its very simplicity, is slighted while the canon, by virtue of its very complexity, reduces the auditor to a pulp of gasping homage.

While abolishing this situation is impossible, however, the clear recognition of it would do a great deal, I believe, to raise musical appreciation everywhere to a higher level. For this reason I make hue and cry and enter protest. I lay an axe at the root of an æsthetic falsehood. Is polyphony really everything it is cracked up to be—especially when it is cracked up to be everything? No. Polyphony is merely a special form of musical utterance, a particular shape into which a musical thought has been moulded. To say that a polyphonic work is higher, or finer, or nobler, or in any way better musically than a work which is homophonic or chordal is equivalent to saying that a drama in blank verse has the æsthetic drop on a drama of prose persuasions. No doubt Shakespere was a greater dramatist than Strind-

berg; but to base his superiority on the blankness of his verse is literary nonsense—nonsense that surely is enormous enough, but no more enormous than the nonsense of ranking Bach above Bizet because the former man could write circular canons around the latter.

In saying what I say, I am not by any means ignoring the historical and indisputable fact that much of the greatest music in the world is—simply happens to be—polyphonic. Nor am I implying, much less affirming, that the independent activity of many voices is so much intellectual acrobatics, a *je ne sais quoi* concession to musical cleverness. On the contrary, contrapuntal activity is a valid function of the art of tone, a legitimate and important feature of the tonal tapestry; indeed, for certain purposes it is indispensable. Two details should not be overlooked, however, when men endeavor to hoist it up critically above the ceiling. First, in the evolutionary scale it stands lower, having been practiced for many centuries before the sense of harmony was developed among musicians. Secondly, the harmonic sense is really a *sine qua non* of the art of counterpoint inasmuch as all worthy contrapuntal motion is a coming to life of the supporting harmony. In other words, the mere independence of moving voices is not sufficient to create an art of counterpoint; what those voices need, and that from which they derive nourishment and intelligent purpose, is that communal sense which takes its seat in homophony. Remove that communal sense, destroy that harmonic structure, and all that remains is mere indiscriminate activity.

V

Enforced draughts of the Pierian spring are no cure for rabies. The professional musician, consequently, will never get far in spreading the love of polyphony by enjoining contrapuntal joys upon the populace. Inasmuch as the average music-lover is solemnly assured that developing a love of counterpoint is his bounden duty, it is scarcely surprising that the average music-lover takes one sniff of this incomparable delight entitled counterpoint and thereupon, foaming at the mouth, makes a dash for the nearest triad in C major.

Such conduct, to be sure, is very silly. But such conduct is also very natural. And it is hence the cause of that natural conduct which I am attacking—not only by sketching certain fundamental truths regarding the relation of polyphony to homophony, but also by ridiculing a tradition which either disregards that relationship or discounts it.

The professors have had their day. They have gone on endlessly about the marvels of counterpoint. They have implied that homophonic music is perhaps good enough stuff for the musical moron, but fare somewhat too shoddy for cultured palates. They have all but stated outright that polyphony is the food that the gods feed on. And it is now time, it seems to me, to ring the curfew. Two hands therefore lustily seize the bell rope.

Traditional values in all the arts have great tenacity, and the supreme elegance of counterpoint is no exception. The plain truth nevertheless remains that polyphony is but a special type of musical rhetoric, good for certain ends and bad for others, and that the majestic importance commonly assigned it is derived, in the last analysis, from mere difficulty. It is that difficulty which intimidates the musical

populace, just as it is the professorial shouting up of polyphony which converts general timidity into plain repugnance, and repugnance (by no devious path) into an outright phobia.

Until the professors are thoroughly cured of their own folly, I greatly fear, polyphonophobia will remain more than a polysyllable.

Karl Muck

By HERBERT F. PEYSER

At the conclusion of the memorable concert which the Hamburg Philharmonic gave in Berlin last October under the direction of Karl Muck, a lady of rare musical sensitiveness and delicate perceptions remarked to me with tears in her eyes: "Muck has not long to live." Startled, I asked her reasons for such a belief, adding that the veteran conductor appeared to be in good health and that his work certainly showed none of the inroads and impairments of age. "Ah, no!" she replied; "but he does show an entirely new warmth and a depth of feeling of a kind he never had before. And Goethe says that when the old develop emotion they are not long for this world."



Absit omen! Let us take Goethe's reflection for a poetic license or for some abstraction of philosophy that need not be construed to the bitter letter and cherish the hope that Karl Muck may be spared for many years to come. But the truth remains that he is emotionally another being from what he was in his Boston Symphony days. Twenty years ago the touchstone of his art was not to be found, like Nikisch's, in the province of the heart and the demesnes of the soul. The gods had made him many things, but not primarily a poet. An inflexible disciplinarian, an unsurpassed technician, a mordant ironist, he rarely, if ever, gave the impression that irony and discipline were protective colorations assumed to shield or to dissemble a tenderly emotional core in the depths of his nature. Today that nature has lost its chill without thereby forfeiting anything of its edge and of its strength. Muck is still the stern, almost awesome taskmaster, the searing intelligence, the graying Mephisto. But something spiritual and mellowing seems to have been liberated in him, something that appears to bathe the spirit of the man in a kind of transfiguring sunset glow whose light exposes riches of soul and treasures of imagination which most of us in earlier years had never remotely suspected in him, however high the artist may otherwise have stood in our esteem.

We have traveled far since those Bostonian days. You have now but to watch Muck lead ten bars of any music whatever to realize what a gulf stretches between the conductorial school of which he, Franz Schalk and Felix Weingartner are about the only survivors and the prima donna darlings of contemporary worship. The difference is as great in its way and as manifest as that between singers of today and those of thirty, forty, fifty years ago. You feel it the instant men like Schalk

or Muck mount the podium. The aura of showmanship and artifice surrounds Muck as little as it surrounded Nikisch or Mahler or Mottl. The thing which radiated from these conductors had nothing in the world to do with the "personality," the "magnetism" and whatnot that today's petted wielders of the little stick exert themselves to project. Its purpose and its goal were different. Muck's platform manner has something seizing but intangible about it which is like a "throw-back" into the preceding generation.

Somehow, though I heard him countless times with the Boston band, I never realized till that Berlin concert last Fall the intense simplicity of the man. We have nothing like it in this age. Not even Toscanini equals this reserve of demeanor or this immense economy of gesture. Show me your modern conductor who will refrain from an ostentatious indication of instrumental entrances the way Muck does! The clenched fist, the convulsive arm seem undreamed of in his philosophy. Whenever possible, a glance of the eye does the necessary work. And the glance of Muck can have artistic consequences of devastating power and significance, even as the move of a finger can unchain effects that crush and shatter. I remember that in America he used to let his arm drop during the Scherzo of the *Eroica* Symphony and, standing motionless as a graven image, allow the orchestra to proceed apparently unconduted as far as the trio. I was inclined to regard the thing in those days as a bit of swank. Today I think differently. For to Muck there seems to be a keen relationship between the restraint, the dimension, the contour, the trajectory of a time-beating movement and the musical phrase or effect to which this movement is applied. One of the things which, after more than fifteen years, stands out vividly in my recollection of his performance of Liszt's *Faust* Symphony is the gorgeous sweep and expanse of his gestures in the final music of apotheosis. Here time beating actually and effortlessly acquired the kind of beauty and meaning to which so much interpretative dancing vainly aspires. Its beauty lay in the fact that it was elicited by the music, not directed at the audience.

II

Despite his superlative musicianship, despite his genius for form, his sense of whip-lash rhythm, his feeling for clarity of orchestral tone, there was a kind of ingrained academic quality in Muck's conducting during his American years that he did not always succeed in transcending. One thought of him primarily as a classicist, though some of his finest achievements were consummated in romantic works, such as the Liszt symphony I have just mentioned. But today this academic slant in his nature seems to have vanished before that strange, suffusing glow of which I spoke and which is a different thing than that mellow benignity of temperament which was incorporated in Nikisch.

In many ways it is extremely regrettable that America never had the opportunity of knowing Muck as an operatic conductor. Indeed, I think it might almost be claimed that many Americans never learned to know Muck rightly till they experienced his operatic performances in Bayreuth, Munich and elsewhere. For me his *Parsifal* is his supreme and ultimate achievement, the memory of which will outlive anything he achieved in the concert hall with Beethoven, Mozart or Brahms. To Cosima Wagner he seemed predestined for this work and there can be no question

that upon his shoulders descended the mantle of Hermann Levi. As to Muck's *Tristan* and *Meistersinger* there may be room for differences of opinion. But to disagree with his *Parsifal* is simply to write oneself down ignorant of *Parsifal*. It owes its supremacy chiefly to the fact that it seeks to capture in this masterpiece what Wagner put into it and not what the artistic philosophy of the present age thinks ought to be in it.

There is in contemporary Germany a school of criticism which endorses a conductor for speeding all Wagnerian tempi on the specious plea that the pace of Wagner's music does not accord with the tendencies of our speed-ridden age and that it should consequently be vitalized by a general acceleration. To this false creed even so gifted a conductor as Leo Blech has repeatedly succumbed. Muck has never suffered any such confusion of issues. He knows that Wagner is not to be read in the light of a transient taste, but only to be interpreted according to its consonance

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Symphony No. 4: Finale. (Tchaikowsky) Two sides. Boston Symphony Orchestra conducted by Karl Muck. One 12-inch disc (V-6050). \$2. (Acoustical recording.)

with what is eternal and immutable in the human spirit. He knows, likewise, how to differentiate between a majestic breadth of musical movement and lifeless sluggishness. Every note of his *Parsifal* is alive and every phrase is charged with infinities. It is not of our age, but of all time.

In 1889 Muck went to Russia to conduct the *Ring* for Angelo Neumann's "travelling Wagner theatre." It was the beginning of his fame. But those performances in what was then St. Petersburg had repercussions over and beyond the conductor's own personal glory. Two musicians who for something like a month listened religiously to every rehearsal that Muck directed were Rimsky-Korsakov and Glazounow. Rimsky later acknowledged that the Wagnerian orchestration as Muck revealed it to him was a determining factor in his artistic life. "From the days of my acquaintance with the *Ring* under Muck I began to orchestrate differently—and in a more consciously Wagnerian manner." For his own part Muck's services to Wagner at that time were not limited to conducting. He lectured on the tetralogy and in a manner that departed strikingly from the traditions of the period. Instead of plying his hearers with a chronicle of leading motives, he concentrated his efforts on familiarizing them with the epic narratives of the Scandinavian Edda, thus leading them to the very source and fountain head of Wagner's work.

It was inevitable that Muck's recent determination to put a period to his Bayreuth activities should have aroused a mighty wagging of tongues. Somehow, his letter of leave-taking addressed to Winifred Wagner, though calm and wholly friendly, does not ring entirely convincing. Possibly more is meant than meets the eye. It is no secret that Muck thought his *Parsifal* rehearsals last year were skimmed in order that Toscanini might be the better prepared to enter into the glory of the Wagnerian kingdom; and a slip during the first act in one of the performances did not persuade him of the contrary. Possibly he would have felt out of place in a more or less wholly new order of things, such as now prevails on the sacred hill. The excuse of inability to adjust himself to new conditions implies, perhaps, a little more than it says. Be this as it may, nothing has aged in Muck's attitude toward his art or in his skill in consummating his ideals. And whether he conducts Wagner or Bach, Brahms or Bruckner or Beethoven, he can still convince the most skeptical doubter of past glories that the day of giants is not solely the vain boast and the hollow superstition of some ageing malcontents.

(Continued from page 241)

movement through without pausing. Questioned about the affair, officials of the RCA Victor Company, under whose auspices the recording was made, termed it an "experiment," hinting, however, that further details would be made public in the near future. In the meanwhile, those of a speculative turn of mind may amuse themselves considering the possible significance of these two points: that Stokowski's hurried return from Europe and sudden appearance in Philadelphia were entirely unexpected, and that the Philadelphia Orchestra has never heretofore—even in the pleasant days when the phonograph industry, like the times, was thriving—held a recording session in mid-summer.

The String Quartets of Beethoven*

By JOSEPH COTTLER

II

If we have passed the time of Mozart, Haydn, and the Op. 18 set of quartets, we are certainly still living under the reign of the Rasoumovsky group. The first and second deserve the superlatives a grateful posterity has accorded them; the third, too, only it is somewhat tamer, as though after the mystery in the Adagio and the madness in the Finale of No. 2 Beethoven was somewhat weary.

The Harp Quartet, Op. 74—The "Quartetto Serioso," Op. 95

In 1809, the date of composition of the misnamed *Harp Quartet*, Beethoven was hoping to marry, and underscoring a translated passage from the Hindu: "The mighty one is free from all desire."

The diary of Amiel has an entry dealing with a quartet concert in which he compares Mozart and Beethoven. "Beethoven—more pathetic, more passionate, more torn with feeling, more intricate, more profound . . . more the slave of his genius, more carried away by his fancy or his passion, more moving and more sublime . . . Beethoven seizes upon you; he is more tragic and oratorical . . . In Mozart the balance of the whole is perfect, and art triumphs; in Beethoven, feeling governs everything, and emotion troubles his art in proportion as it deepens it." As one sufferer about another, Amiel does not say which quartet of Beethoven he has just heard, but if it wasn't Op. 74, it certainly was Op. 95.

The chromaticism and the suspensions (*cf.* Wagner) are becoming more and more the idiom of Beethoven. The thought flows more and more continuously, one-piece, and the outlines of his phrasing merge and unfold in endless, irresolute curves, and their power of evocation from the intent listener is hypnotic. The polyphonic volume is enormous, the motion bewildering, and the colors myriad. The high spots of the *Harp Quartet* are the introductory Adagio, and the savage Presto (what a man to have written a *Sacre du Printemps*!).

The F Minor Quartet, Op. 95, is the climax of all the sixteen, nay of all quartet literature. From here on string quartets will be different, but it is hard to see how they can be more skilful, more telling in direct emotional appeal. It is from first to last breathlessly dramatic, a plotting of terse motives which, pitted against each other, stand out from the polyphony with their individualities as little impaired apparently as the actors in a set. Nothing is wasted on transitions or modulatory gaps. Every note is significant. Even the academic treatment of the canon in the second movement is as vital as though it had nothing to do with rules and tradition and choral modes. But, because each restatement of the theme on its own tonal plane is so different in color, so, like a new view of an old troubling thought, this canon develops like a cry heard from separate quarters of space. Beethoven's counterpoint here creates a tonal space.

* The first part of Mr. Cottler's article was published in the July issue.

The *Quartetto Serioso* brings romanticism in music to its height as a technique of musical expression. In ten years Beethoven has come as far from Op. 18, Mozart and Haydn, as we have ever been—that is, to the *Quartetto Serioso*. We do well to turn our back on it. In the hands of Brahms and Wagner it is safe musically, and in the ear of the insensitive it is but pleasant noise. But Mozart and Haydn are safer, for they more nearly approximate the Greek ideal of self-containment and fortitude, and are simpler models for musicings. But in the heart of the sufferer, declamations of the kind of Opera 74 and 95 are mighty troublous.

The Last Quartets

"I have now learned how to compose," said Beethoven at the age of forty-seven and after the Eighth Symphony. Underlying the remark is a changed attitude toward life. After lusty youth and the stormy thirties, the declining man accepts his fate. The dweller is established in his vale of tears, the "lifer" attached to his cell, the invalid adjusted to his disease. The deaf musician, alone in his shabby lodgings, has really a milder view of the inevitabilities. His eccentricities can all be ascribed to impatience with the bothers of this world, and compensatorily music, to him, is not an occupation but a real world in which to erect a structure for his profuse ideas that an imagination more active than ever pushes out in crowds like the passing shapes in Shakespeare's lines. Room! First he can brush aside the remaining vestiges of sonata form which limits him to four movements, two contrasting themes and certain other troublesome features which no longer serve. The old suite form, the oratorio, are freer designs. Secondly, solidity achieved by harmonic means alone is too wasteful. Counterpoint rather must be the builder which, though it disregards the clash of passing notes, allows for maximum activity. Harmony, in itself, is useful largely to lend homogeneity to all the shapes.

Something on this order must be the *rationale* for the last five quartets, the first of which followed its immediate predecessor, Op. 95, by fourteen years, three years before the death of Beethoven. It is in any case certain that our composer's third period leap forward and out of sight of his contemporaries was transacted by bracing himself against a wall of musical thought which two generations had forgotten and which was, therefore, old enough to be new—by taking a step Backward, a form of strategy with which we are so familiar today. That is how it happened that three of the last five quartets have more than four movements or sections; that Op. 130, in its original form, had for its Finale the famous or infamous fugue now known as Op. 133 and subsequently displaced in this quartet, on one of the few occasions that Beethoven followed practical advice (the present Finale, composed a few months before Beethoven died, is his last complete work and is amazing—considering that he was in his last struggles—for its humor and spry fancy. The high pure regions of chamber music, indeed!); that that unsurpassed musical work, Op. 131, begins with a fugue; that Op. 132 has a section in the Lydian mode. Now these fugues are not like any other in literature. To Beethoven the fugue was not an end in itself. "Into the old mold handed down to us, we must pour an element of genuine poetry," he expressed it. One could render a passable imitation of a Bach fugue, for instance. But the queerness, the eeriness, the unfugal character of these fugues is impossible of similar conception, because, while the essential quality of any other fugue is its drive, the slow fugue in Op. 131,

as well as the movement in the old Lydian mode, are blank, spellbound, as immobile as the façade of a deserted cathedral in the moonlight. (You can imagine anything you please. Beethoven, in those ultimate deeds of the human spirit, Opera 131, 132, gives you all possible worlds.)

Yet in Beethoven's day, these five quartets, which are beyond compare, mystified his audience and as public events were failures. It is fitting that Tschaiikowsky should hate them. The reason for that is not hard to find. In the first place the scores are hellishly difficult to perform, and Beethoven could only supervise their rehearsal with his eyes. Then, they are individual in style, elliptical in expression, and, in their emotional demand, too exhaustive for people used to easy satisfaction. They can be followed only with shut eyes and the most intimate of contact—on discs, perhaps. Of course they are mystical. The older a thinker gets, the more apart he is and the more incomprehensible. Then, if ever, he ought to have One to understand him. But the quartets have structure. There is a tonal architecture that directs the progression of key signatures always. Op. 131, for example, has six sections, one for each of the tones in the so-called cadence formula of C Sharp Minor. The structure, in fact, is so rigorous that Tovey interprets Beethoven's last period as one of inexorable logic, where each note can be deduced from the preceding. And if a famous conductor can vouch for the logic, Beethoven's tailor gives assurance of the touching sentiment of at least the Adagio, Op. 132, at which he "wept like a child." Beethoven himself is said to have burst into tears whenever he read over the score of the Cavatina, Op. 130. That is doubtless crude of him, like laughing at his own jokes.

He showed the best of taste, however, in considering Op. 131 in C Sharp Minor his best quartet. He might have gone further and called Opera 131 and 132 his best works. Only the Missa Solemnis and the Ninth Symphony are in the same class. But they are as safe from objective literary appraisal as is a sunrise from the summit of Mont Blanc or the mystery of the sacrament. Indeed they could well be taken for a creed of Art or the text of a religion, since they must have inspired some major prophets. To me, Op. 131 is a sublime oratorio with the same sincerity, ecstasy and rarefaction that Franck displays. And all through the last quartets, the blandness that became Brahms is in the fullest evidence, especially in the Finale of Op. 132, which is even scored in the manner so dear to Brahms. It is dismaying what slaves Beethoven has made of us all and, of course, in the manner of slaves let us revolt and take up again with the bar-counting of Haydn and Mozart. Professional music critics will be delighted, and we will be spared the sort of word(y)-pictures that Wagner offers of the C Sharp Minor Quartet:

I should designate the rather long introductory Adagio . . . as the awakening on the morning of a day—"which throughout its tardy course no single longing shall fulfill, not one!" . . . The introspective eye views (Allegro 6-8) there, too, the comforting phenomenon perceptible to itself only, in which Desire becomes a sweet, sorrowful play with itself: the inmost dream-image awakens in a most charming reminiscence. . . . He now (Andante 2-4) employs the revived power of spells peculiarly his own, to conjure a graceful shape, the beautified witness of purest innocence, in order that he may unceasingly enrapture himself by ever new and unprecedented transformations, brought about by the refraction of the rays of eternal light which he causes to fall upon it. . . .

Enough. While Wagner is synthesizing the arts, Beethoven gives complete emotional pleasure with his music alone.

ORCHESTRA



BEETHOVEN

C-LX129

and

C-LX130

IMPORTED

LEONORE *Overture No. 3*. Three sides and

THE RUINS OF ATHENS: *Turkish March*. One side. Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra conducted by Willem Mengelberg. Two 12-inch discs. \$2 each.

Miniature Score: Eulenburg No. 601.

B-90172

to

B-90175

SYMPHONY *No. 5 in C Minor*, Op. 67. Eight sides. Berlin

State Opera Orchestra conducted by Richard Strauss.

Four 12-inch discs in album. Brunswick Set No. 25. \$6.

Miniature Score: Eulenburg No. 402.

As popular on the phonograph as in the concert hall, Beethoven continues to get his full share of attention from the recorders. Even the sudden flood of Beethoven works that appeared during the centennial a few years ago failed to create a surfeit, and new versions of the various symphonies and overtures seem always in demand. Two of his most popular compositions, one incomparably played and recorded and the other only slightly less so, appear this month.

If, from the whole range of recorded music, one were called upon to pick out some record calculated to give the most convincing reproduction of a symphony orchestra, the chances are slightly more than even that one of the records of the Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra would be selected. Recorded in the Amsterdam Concert Hall—which must have uncommonly fine acoustics—with Willem Mengelberg conducting, these discs are always distinguished by their persuasive realism, faithful tone, fine balance and superb clarity; in these things, one may justifiably say, the Concertgebouw records are unsurpassed and only occasionally approached. Whether credit for this is due Mengelberg, or the recorders, or whether it should be divided evenly between them, of course, can't be accurately determined; but whatever the secret it seems to be one that can be repeated indefinitely, for it is a sober fact that not once, in the past couple of years, has a bad recording issued from this source.

Moreover, the band seldom gives a disappointing performance, so that in its discs we can generally depend upon hearing a first-rate interpretation vividly realized and recorded. In this latest version of the *Leonore* Overture No. 3 all of these qualities, both of recording and interpretation, are conspicuously evident. This music is heard so often these days that its magnificence is likely to escape us unless the performance be an arresting one. Luckily, that is what it is here, thus amply justifying the recorders' decision to release yet another version of the work. It is hard to quarrel with the practice of duplications when they turn out so successfully as this. A large part of the effectiveness of the *Leonore* No. 3 lies in its thaumaturgical shifting of moods, its sudden, exhilarating change from gloom and tense enigma to unrestrained joy. Confronted with such music, Mengelberg knows exactly what to do, and the results he obtains here are really magnificent. The



trumpet calls in the middle of the work and the impetuous rush and sweep of the ending are perfectly achieved. . . . The *Turkish March*, compared to the great Overture, is inferior stuff, but it is played with tremendous gusto, and the recording is similarly stirring.

Strauss' version of the Fifth Symphony not only increases one's respect for his qualities as a conductor, but it also renews one's admiration for the Fifth. Under Strauss' revealing baton, the work sounds like the compelling, authentic masterpiece it really is, and not the somewhat frayed and petulant snarl it is rapidly becoming because of too many performances. Constantly repeated, any musical composition tends, naturally and inevitably, to lose its original glow, and in this respect the Fifth is no different from other works. In consequence it would be a mercy if it were given the rest it has surely earned. Heard at decent intervals instead of four or five and maybe more times a season, its majestic and incomparably moving measures would again thrill us as they used to.

Indubitably this is the finest performance of the work we have yet had on records, and it is also the best recorded. The two domestic sets, Landon Ronald's and Felix Weingartner's, belong to the early days of electrical recording, and so are marred by unfortunate mechanical flaws. There remains, then, only the Vienna Philharmonic version, reviewed here a few months back. In many ways a meritorious piece of work, it yet lacks the fine sweep, power and vigor that Strauss puts into his interpretation, and so, of the two, the Strauss is preferable. The tireless State Opera Orchestra, urged on by Strauss' persuasive gestures, plays commendably, and although by no means a recent recording, having been issued by Polydor several years ago, the set is admirably recorded, comparing favorably with the best we get nowadays.

D'INDY
B-90176

{ SYMPHONY ON A FRENCH MOUNTAIN AIR *for Piano and Orchestra: Finale, Op. 25.* Two sides. Jeanne-Marie Darré (Piano) and Lamoureux Orchestra conducted by Albert Wolff. One 12-inch disc. \$1.50.

It is eminently fitting that the first recording of the Finale of Vincent d'Indy's Symphony on a French Mountain Air (often called the *Symphonie Céventole*) should have been made by the Lamoureux Orchestra, for it was this band that, in 1886, first played the work. The gross neglect that d'Indy has been accorded by the recording companies has often been the subject of indignant comment, and so it is only necessary here to add the wish that this oversight be remedied in the only possible way: by the appearance of some of his major works on records. Surely two versions of the Prelude to *Fervaal* and one of the Finale to the *Symphonie Céventole* do not constitute a showing worthy of one of the most eminent of modern composers!

D'Indy has often been accused, falsely it appears, of being too cerebral in his music. Such a charge could hardly be reasonably applied to the *Symphonie Céventole*, and in fact this recording should do much toward dispelling such a groundless claim. For the Finale given here fairly sparkles with life and vigor, and there isn't a dull moment in it. Speaking of this work, Jean-Aubry, whose intelligent enthusiasm for French music has done much toward giving the world a proper understanding of

the more worthy achievements of French composers, has said that in it d'Indy "proves his own recognition of his own antecedents and the undeniable indices of his personality, rooted in the rugged and massive Cévennes." A folk-song, as would be suspected, forms the thematic basis of the Symphony, and the cyclic method, so often employed by d'Indy's great teacher and master, César Franck, is used with excellent effect. The orchestration is elaborate, and the piano, though not considered as a solo instrument, has a dominating part. The result, an absorbing and lively piece of music, is singularly felicitous.



As for the recording, it is sufficient to say that it is fully as good as that in other discs made by the Lamoureux Orchestra. The piano is beautifully reproduced, and the whole thing, indeed, is played and recorded with exhilarating dash and verve. A novelty to be cordially welcomed.

J. STRAUSS

V-9990

to

V-9994

WALTZES OF JOHANN STRAUSS: *Thousand and One Nights*; *My Darling Waltz*, from "The Gypsy Baron"; *Artist's Life*; *Village Swallows*; *Reminiscences of Vienna (Potpourri)*. Ten sides. Berlin State Opera Orchestra conducted by Leo Blech, Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Erich Kleiber and Clemens Krauss, and Salon Orchestra. Five 12-inch discs in album. Victor Set C-15. \$7.50.

Nothing could be more appropriate and genuinely welcome than an album of Johann Strauss' waltzes. In some quarters, as everybody knows, Strauss is viewed with more contempt than esteem, while in others he is given rather more praise than he in point of fact deserves. Neither attitude, however, need disturb us greatly. The one, which puts Strauss on a level with Suppé, Ziehrer, Lincke, Waldteufel, Kálmán, Léhar and Friml, is obviously based on a very superficial knowledge of his works; and the other, which makes of him a sort of waltzing Bach eternally on the loose, would cause Strauss, an honest and modest man, to blush were he here today.

Approached properly and in a suitable spirit, his music can give tremendous satisfaction, which is neither so low and shameful as some piously believe nor so lofty and exalted as others fervently profess it to be. To try to analyze that satisfaction results inevitably in absurdity, as the popular phrase proving the Strauss waltzes to be "as sparkling as champagne" readily demonstrates. The important thing is that Johann Strauss' music, with its gay tunes, its vivacious waltzes, its infinite variety, and its brilliant display of technical ingenuity and resourcefulness, is incomparably superior to all but a very small amount of what is conveniently termed "good light music," and as such it should be appreciated. The judicious person, not too seriously impressed with himself, others, or the world, does not try to discover the "meaning of life"—which can be done so much better by theologians and professional philosophers—nor does he try to probe too deeply into the sources of its pleasures. To do so only produces tantalizing, unsatisfactory and endlessly conflicting answers, as a glance at the heavily laden shelves of the philosophy and psychology sections of any good public library will quickly prove.

The domestic catalogues do not give much space to Johann Strauss. Scattered here and there, the domestically available recordings of his music don't make a very impressive showing. Until now those who wanted really authentic and first-rate



performances of these pieces have been compelled to search through the various foreign catalogues and import their findings. Victor now makes that laborious duty unnecessary—at least for the person who is content with half a dozen or so of the best Strauss waltzes—for in this album it has gathered together some of the finest of the Strauss recordings made by its German and Austrian affiliations. The whole thing is felicitously achieved: the selection of numbers is beyond cavil, the interpretations authentic and competent, and the recording consistently good.

Thousand and One Nights, an enchanting number, is played in a brisk, straightforward fashion by the Vienna Philharmonic under Clemens Krauss. On the whole, the recording in this disc is the finest in the album, though there is no particular fault to be found with the recording in any of the selections. The *Gypsy Baron* contains some of Strauss' loveliest tunes, and the waltz given here is as charming a piece as Strauss ever wrote. A good recording of *Artist's Life*, which Mencken says Huneker preferred to *There's Sunshine in My Soul*, has long been needed; this one by Kleiber fulfills all requirements very competently. It is played with infinite care, as is also *Village Swallows*, rendered by the same performers. *Village Swallows*, incidentally, belongs to Johann's brother, Joseph, and not to Johann, doesn't it? Some ascribe it to the one, and some to the other. The label here gives credit to Johann. The *Reminiscences of Vienna*, the least desirable record in the group, brings together portions of *Thousand and One Nights*, the *Blue Danube* and excerpts from a great many other Strauss pieces. It is played by what the label describes as a Salon Orchestra, and the conductor's name is omitted.

SAINT-SAËNS

O-238.205

and

O-238.206

IMPORTED

PHAËTON: *Symphonic Poem*. Four sides. Paris Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by G. Cloez. Two 10-inch discs. \$1.25 each.

O-123.749

IMPORTED

MARCHE HÉROIQUE. Two sides. Colonne Orchestra conducted by Gabriel Pierné. One 12-inch disc. \$2.

It is hardly likely that either of these works will add much of consequence to Saint-Saëns' fame. Neither is very exciting, but of the two *Phaëton* is infinitely the superior: it at least contains something resembling life and bounce. *Phaëton*, first produced in 1873 at a concert under the direction of Eduard Colonne, has the following preface:

Phaëton has obtained leave to drive his father's, the Sun's, chariot through the heavens. But his unskilful hands lead the steeds astray. The flaming chariot, thrown out of its course, approaches the terrestrial regions. The whole universe is about to perish in flames, when Jupiter strikes the rash Phaëton with his thunderbolt.

All this is suitably treated by Saint-Saëns' music. The recording and interpretation are very good.

Marche Héroïque is quite the dullest piece of music we have encountered in some months: swamped beneath an overwhelming load of superficial glitter and brilliance, it lumbers along in a hopelessly clumsy and awkward manner. Directed by Pierné, the Colonne band does what it can with the piece, and its efforts are adequately, if not impressively, recorded.

LOTHAR
V-EH638
IMPORTED

LORD SPLEEN: (a) *Overture*; (b) *Ständchen, Fuge und Fox-Trot über dasselbe thema*. Two sides. Berlin Symphony Orchestra conducted by Clemens Schmalstich. One 12-inch disc. \$1.75.



WEINBERGER
V-AM2864
IMPORTED

SCHWANDA, THE BAGPIPE PLAYER: *Polka and Furiant*. Two sides. Berlin State Opera Orchestra conducted by Leo Blech. One 10-inch disc. \$1.25.

It would be pleasant, in reviewing the first of these records, to announce the arrival of a new genius in the person of Mark Lothar, the young composer of the opera, *Lord Spleen*. But long and earnest training in the Coolidge school of perfect discretion and caution makes any such exciting estimate difficult to arrive at. The record, in brief, reveals nothing extraordinary. But then neither do many other records; and if you are not expecting too much, Lothar's opulent scoring, his brisk tunes, the excellent playing by the Berlin Symphony Orchestra and the brilliant reproduction should make the disc a mildly engaging one. It is entitled to a place on the shelf somewhere near the selections from *Schwanda* and *Jonny spielt auf*. Those who demand first of all in a record that it contain brand new music will find this one admirably adapted for their needs, for *Lord Spleen* had its first performance so recently as November 11, 1930, at the Dresden State Opera. Lothar, still in his twenties, lives in Berlin. His earlier dramatic work, *Tyll*, text by Hugo F. Königsgarten, who also supplied the text for *Lord Spleen*, was given in Berlin last season. The later work is in two acts, and it is based on Ben Jonson's *Silent Woman*. According to Geraldine de Courcy's review of the première, which appeared in the December 10, 1930, issue of *Musical America*, it recounts

the refined mental tortures inflicted on the eccentric Lord Spleen by the scheming members of his own household, who have no sympathy with his anti-noise complex. This mania leads him to barricade himself beyond padded walls and sheathe his little world in the protective armor of Elisabethan costume in order to succumb to the blessed joys of stillness which Pater has been pleased to designate as the supreme type of mystical sensuality . . . The idea itself is replete with fascinating possibilities for the keen appreciator of humorous situations. Spleen's search for a wife whose congenial loquacity will be weathered to his *mise-en-scène* is juicy meat for any comedian. The two young artisans, however, could imagine no more effective way of climaxing their little intrigue than by setting off a broadside of high power but obsolete revue guns in the accepted *Jonny spielt auf* and *Maschinist Hopkins* model, which totally destroyed the dramatic core of the work.

As was hinted above, the music is by no means dull, and the record has a certain value in that it brings into this country music that only Germany has thus far been privileged to hear. The *Overture* is rather insipid, but the reverse side contains more lively matter. . . . Dr. Weissmann's record of selections from Weinberger's enormously popular *Schwanda* was reviewed on page 309 of the October issue. This by Dr. Blech is every bit as good and just as exhilarating. The playing is smooth and brisk, the recording is masterly, and the whole thing comes off with a delightful flourish. It is an extremely effective little disc. *Schwanda*, incidentally, will be one of the novelties offered by the Metropolitan Opera Company next season.



**TSCHAI-
KOWSKY**

V-D1933

IMPORTED

Miniature Score: Eulenburg No. 851.

MARCHE SLAV. Two sides. London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Albert Coates. One 12-inch disc. \$2.

**MOUSSORG-
SKY
RIMSKY-
KORSAKOW**

V-D1934

IMPORTED

THE FAIR AT SOROTCHINTZKY: *Gopak*. (Moussorgsky) One side and

MLADA: *Cortège des Nobles*. (Rimsky-Korsakow) One side. London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Albert Coates. One 12-inch disc. \$2.

BORODIN

V-AB627

IMPORTED

ON THE STEPPES OF CENTRAL ASIA. Two sides. London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Albert Coates. One 12-inch disc. \$2.

Miniature Score: Eulenburg No. 833.

By the time this appears in print, Albert Coates will be in the United States to conduct some of the Summer concerts of the New York Philharmonic-Symphony and Philadelphia Orchestras. Since these out-door concerts provide the only opportunity for most Americans to hear this fine conductor, it is doubly fortunate that the list of his phonograph recordings is a copious one. In the early days of electrical recording, Coates and Stokowski stood at the very top of recording conductors; their achievements, in those far-off days, were unsurpassed and, indeed, seldom if ever equalled. Now that recording grows increasingly better, of course, practically all the well-known conductors make records, so that today Coates and Stokowski, formerly almost alone in the field, have plenty of formidable rivals. Nonetheless, though now confronted with more competition than in former years, they still maintain their lofty positions, and pretty nearly anything we get from them is reasonably certain of winning immediate popularity.

Always at his best in Russian music, Coates has lately been devoting nearly all his recording time to Russian composers. Wagner used to occupy most of his attention, so that the change, injecting variety into his list of records, offers a pleasant contrast. The first item here, Tschaikowsky's much battered *Marche Slav*, is not noticeably great music, and most of us are probably pretty tired of the composer's mock heroics—knowing, as we do, that under all the savage leaps and bounds there quakes a timid, shrinking, excessively frightened soul,—but even in spite of all this the record is well worth listening to. Coates' vigorous interpretation and the superb recording—note especially the double-basses and kettle-drums on the second side—make an attractive combination.

The Moussorgsky piece, from his unfinished opera, *The Fair at Sorochintzky*, which was produced at the Metropolitan this past season, is briskly done; it is a delightful little dance, full of gaiety and verve. The Rimsky-Korsakow number, apparently unrecorded elsewhere, is played with great pomp and glitter. It is very colorful, with bright trumpet blasts, impressive drum rolls and delicately achieved instrumentation much in evidence. A charming melody, given to the strings, appears

about half-way through the record. An engaging disc, it is recorded with the utmost skill.



After the two symphonies, the symphonic sketch, *On the Steppes of Central Asia*, is perhaps Borodin's most important orchestral work. Intended as a kind of musical accompaniment to one of a series of historical *tableaux vivants* which formed part of the celebrations of the silver jubilee of the Czar Alexander II, in 1880, the work begins quietly, picturing the ominous silence of the sandy steppes of Central Asia. A Russian song is heard, followed by one more Oriental in character. A caravan, escorted by Russian troops, crosses the immense desert, and the tramp of horses and camels, mingled with songs of the Russians and Asiatics, is suggested in a colorful, effective motley. The music comes to a quiet ending, as if the caravan had disappeared in the distance.

The skilful instrumental coloring, the occasional barbaric outbursts of the entire orchestra, and the softer passages, evoking the silence of the desert, make this a remarkable and highly enjoyable work. It is played skilfully, and the recording, as in other late Coates releases, is superb.

WARLOCK
D-K576
IMPORTED

{ CAPRIOL: *Suite*. (a) *Basse—Danse*. (b) *Pavane*. (c) *Tordion*. (d) *Bransles*. (e) *Pieds-en-l'air*. (f) *Mottachins*. Two sides. London Chamber Orchestra conducted by Anthony Bernard. One 12-inch disc. \$1.50.

Peter Warlock is the name which the late Philip Heseltine signed to his musical compositions. His unfortunate death last Winter was a severe blow not only to British music but also to musical activities in England, for he was both a gifted composer and a discerning critic, as his revealing book on Delius demonstrates.

Except for a Serenade for Strings (written for Delius on his sixtieth birthday), issued sometime ago by the National Gramophonic Society, and a solitary song, nothing of Warlock's has been recorded. The Decca Company accordingly is due praise for its enterprise in bringing out the *Capriol Suite*. In the *Gramophone* for May, the capable Mr. W. R. Anderson reviews the disc, and it is from his notice that the quotation below is taken: "Warlock has orchestrated these dances from the famous book about dancing, called *Orchésographie*, made by the priest Jehan Tabourot, who, always delighting in dancing, set down his expert directions, and the tunes, when he was nearly seventy (his book appeared in the Armada year). He anagraphed his name into Thoinot Arbeau (the J standing for I), and as such he is remembered—the more widely because we now have Warlock's lovely harmonisations of some of his examples, which have several times been broadcast. Capriol was the imaginary lawyer-friend (Tabourot was a lawyer's son) with whom 'Arbeau' discussed the mysteries of dancing, in the book."

The music, charming in its simplicity, is full of delightful tunes, cunningly orchestrated, and the disc, setting forth music so attractive and yet so unfamiliar, should have a sale sufficiently large to reward its sponsors for their courage in issuing it. Finally, it is pleasant to report that the Decca recording, sometimes so execrable when more than a very small group of instruments is employed, is here very good; now and then it is somewhat blurred and vague, but this is not offensively noticeable,



and on the whole it is full-volumed and reveals a pleasing clarity. The London Chamber Orchestra plays the Suite briskly and with commendable skill.

ROUSSEL
C-67952D
and
C-67953D

LE FESTIN DE L'ARAIGNÉE: *Ballet-Pantomime*. (a) *Prelude and Entrance of the Ant*. (b) *Dance and Death of the Butterfly*. (c) *Birth and Dance of the Dayfly*. (d) *Death and Burial of the Dayfly*. Four sides. Straram Orchestra conducted by Walther Straram. Two 12-inch discs. \$1.50 each.

Miniature Score: Durand et Cie.

This is the second recording of Albert Roussel's *Le Festin de l'Araignée*, French H. M. V. having put out a competently produced version slightly over a year ago played by "Le Trigentuoer Lyonnais." The set was reviewed on page 44 of the April, 1930, issue.

Edward Burlinghame Hill, in his "Modern French Music," gives a clear outline of the events the music depicts, which is quoted below:

After a prelude, the curtain rises upon a garden. The spider is putting the finishing touches to her web, and is surveying the prospects as to prey. Some ants enter; they discover a rose petal and carry it away with difficulty. A butterfly enters and dances. The spider tempts the butterfly near her web. She is caught in it, struggles and dies. The spider disengages the butterfly from the web, envelops her in a shroud, and dances her triumph. A piece of fruit falls noisily from its tree. The spider is terrified. Some fruit worms wish to feast upon the fruit, but are prevented by two praying-mantes. The worms elude them, and rapidly penetrate the fruit. The mantes, irritated by the worms' tricks, provoke each other to single combat. At last the mantes are caught in the web. Again the spider dances. A moth hatches out and begins to dance. The worms crawl out of the fruit. They have become very fat. They dance with the moth. The spider now prepares to feast upon the butterfly. One of the mantes has freed himself from the web. He comes up unnoticed and stabs the spider with his "sword." She dies in agony. Night falls on the solitary garden.

In setting forth this interesting drama, Roussel uses an appropriately small orchestra. Small it is—but, in Roussel's hands, immensely effective and surprisingly eloquent. Such things as the Prelude, the entrance of the ants, their laborious attempts to carry off the rose petal, the dainty dance of the butterfly, the grotesque dance of the spider and its subsequent unhappy death, the serene conclusion picturing nightfall—these episodes are strikingly portrayed in music notable for its deft humor, its quick, sure strokes, its subtlety, its unfailing charm, its vividness, and, where necessary, its dramatic force. It is, too, music that will not offend even the most orthodox ears.

The Straram Orchestra, which has some fine records to its credit, maintains in this recording its high reputation, playing the piece briskly and with fitting humor. Both it and "Le Trigentuoer Lyonnais," whose version, incidentally, has the approval of the composer, seem to fare unusually well with the music, but the Straram set is a little more clearly recorded. For this reason, and also because it is more accessible, since it is issued domestically, it will probably have the wider circulation. The recording is a highly competent piece of work. The two records, containing music not often encountered elsewhere, make a delightful, and eminently worth-while, addition to Columbia's masterwork series, already bulging pleasantly with desirable items.

**TSCHAI-
KOWSKY**

V-11091
and
V-11092

FRANCESCA DA RIMINI: *Symphonic Fantasia*. Four sides.
London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Albert Coates.
Two 12-inch discs. \$1.50 each.

Miniature Score: Eulenburg No. 840.

This, one of the most vivid and realistic of the Coates recordings, was reviewed, from the imported pressings, on page 169 of the June issue. Victor's release of the work is well-timed, since Coates is to conduct some of the concerts of the Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra this Summer.

**BEETHOVEN
GODARD**

V-36038

MOONLIGHT SONATA: *Adagio sostenuto*. (Beethoven-arr. Shilkret) Victor Concert Orchestra conducted by Nathaniel Shilkret. One side and
ADAGIO PATHÉTIQUE, Op. 128, No. 3. (Benjamin Godard) One side. Victor String Ensemble conducted by Nathaniel Shilkret. One 12-inch disc. \$1.25.

Nathaniel Shilkret's incorrigible lust for arranging now brings him to Beethoven, the first movement of whose Sonata for pianoforte, Op. 27, No. 2, he here adapts for the Victor Concert Orchestra. It is a banal and entirely unnecessary arrangement, but if it succeeds in persuading anyone to hear the original pianoforte version, it will have accomplished a not unworthy purpose. The Godard *Adagio Pathétique*, on the reverse side, is insipid and colorless. Both numbers are splendidly recorded.

ROSSINI

V-C1996

IMPORTED

LA BOUTIQUE FANTASQUE: *Selections*. (Rossini-Respighi-Carr) Two sides. Royal Opera Orchestra, Covent Garden, conducted by Eugène Goossens. One 12-inch disc. \$1.75.

DELIBES

C-LX114

and

C-LX115

IMPORTED

SYLVIA BALLET: (a) *Prelude*; (b) *The Huntresses*; (c) *Intermezzo and Valse Lente*; (d) *Pizzicati*; (e) *Cortège*. Four sides. British Symphony Orchestra conducted by Oscar Fried. Two 12-inch discs. \$2 each.

None but the professional modernists—*i. e.*, those excessively earnest and solemn young men and women whose approval goes only to works composed during the fortnight—will object to these pleasant recordings. Good light music, well-played and recorded, is not conspicuously abundant, so that competently produced discs like these should be cordially welcomed. *La Boutique Fantasque*, we seem to remember hearing somewhere, was originally a set of piano pieces; these Respighi arranged for orchestra. Carr's share in the undertaking remains something of a mystery. At any rate, the whole thing is very attractive, and Goossens and the Royal Opera Orchestra set forth the engaging tunes with verve and animation. The recording is first-rate.

Delibes' ballets are still pleasantly remembered, and though compared to modern ones they may seem a little dull, they certainly are not lacking in gaudiness and



color. His music for the various stage pictures is skilfully written and effective and makes excellent listening. As rendered here by the British Symphony Orchestra and Oscar Fried, it sounds very appealing and fresh; the popular *Intermezzo* and *Pizzicati*, in particular, will charm with their grace and crispness in this recording. No fault can be found with the reproduction.



CONCERTO

CHOPIN

PA-R902

to

PA-R904

and

PA-E11113

and

PA-E11114

IMPORTED

CONCERTO NO. 1 in *E Minor*, Op. 11. Ten sides. Moriz Rosenthal (Piano) and Berlin State Opera Orchestra conducted by Frederick Weissmann.

Three 10-inch and two 12-inch discs in album. \$7.75.

Both of the Chopin concertos have been done before, Alexander Brailowsky and the Berlin Philharmonic, recording for Polydor, and Marguerite Long and the Paris Conservatory Orchestra, playing for Columbia, having given us the first and second of these works, respectively. Of the two, most people agree that the latter is the better piece of work, both as regards the interpretation and the recording. There is room, then, for a good recording of the Concerto in *E Minor*, but any hopes that Rosenthal's version would supply it are promptly banished by the mediocre reproduction that mars parts of almost every record in the album.

Had the recording engineers not bungled their job, the set would probably have been a notable piece of work. Written when Chopin was still under twenty, the Concerto naturally reveals many weaknesses and in particular his immaturity at the time of the composition of the work; the themes are pretty but lack strength, and the whole thing is poorly put together. But it offers abundant opportunity for a capable soloist to shine, and in the hands of Rosenthal it takes on a charming eloquence and an attractive romantic glow that are surely not negligible.

The exasperating recording, however, allows Rosenthal's competence only to be suggested. Very good in spots, in others it is just bad enough to spoil one's pleasure in the adequate portions; one no sooner gets a tantalizing glimpse of Rosenthal's superlative playing when something goes wrong, and an abominable confusion of orchestra and tinkling piano, blurred, weak, hopelessly indistinct, follows.

Dr. Weissmann's orchestra performs valiantly, but it is severely handicapped by the rather bald orchestration, and the recording, though on the whole kinder to it than to the piano, does not do it justice. We have a right to expect more finished recording today than is evident here, and the set accordingly can hardly be recommended very warmly.

CHAMBER MUSIC



TURINA

C-LFX132

to

C-LFX134

IMPORTED

TRIO NO. 1. Six sides. Court of Belgium Trio.
Three 12-inch discs. \$2 each.

For the past two centuries Spain has added to the intellectual life of the world a little more than has Iceland. There does not seem to be anything in the Spanish genius which can account for its comparative aridity, since the racial soil is fertile enough in characteristic dress, dance, sport, and food. What has perhaps been lacking heretofore is a culture and economy which the recent revolution may have begun and the yield of which may be another Golden Age of independence and vigor. Now and then, it is true, an artist has arisen in Spain, who, having assimilated transmontane influence, yet remained national and a spokesman. Such a one is Manuel de Falla. More often foreign culture assimilates him and gives back to Spain a polite echo. Such a one is the composer of this Trio, Joaquin Turina.

I assume that the Trio is representative of Turina's work, for everything else I know of him is contained in the 1928 edition of Grove, where it appears that he is a contemporary of Falla; that from 1905 to 1914 he was a student in d'Indy's Schola Cantorum; that his chief musical interests are chamber music and the stage, for which he has several compositions. No mention is made of this Trio, from which it would seem that he has produced it within the last few years.

That fact makes it all the more disappointing, since it proves to be a stale French concoction, prepared two decades ago; a kind of grenadine and flat Vichy which it would never do to put before a connoisseur. I do not know why I must feel so strongly. There are those who care for grenadine. And as for the connoisseur, he is too unhappy to be followed in his search for the individual among piles of patterns. His disappointment with Turina's Trio is based, in a measure, on his being able to predict batches of harmonies and intervals and progress generally, not through hard logic, but through sheer memory. . . . Let us be kinder. Turina's lack of inventiveness puts one at his ease. After the nervous energy of Brahms and Debussy, Turina will be consistent with them and restful. So all things have their uses. We will be dull rather than unpleasant, for Turina is not unpleasant.

Despite the academic titles of the three movements—*i. e.*, Prelude and Fugue, Theme and Variations, Sonate,—the Trio is of the *salon* type of entertainment, in which any deep sonorities are absent. The Prelude is a high-pitched declamation, a little too insistent of its languor. The Theme and Variations takes up the thematic burden of the first movement, but the variations are really effected by means of obbligati. For what distinguishes the obbligato from the true variation is the self-importance and independence of the latter as a development. But we have already quarreled with the composer for his lack of inventiveness. The Finale completes the cycle in lively dance fragments and ends, of course, with the opening declamation.

This number will not make bad dinner music.

JOSEPH COTTLER

**BEETHOVEN**

C-LX109

to

C-LX113

IMPORTED

SEPTET in E Flat Major, Op. 20. Ten sides. J. Léner (Violin), S. Roth (Viola), I. Hartman ('Cello), C. Hobday (String Bass), C. Draper (Clarinet), E. W. Hinchcliffe (Bassoon) and Aubrey Brain (French Horn).
Five 12-inch discs in album. \$10.

Miniature Score: Philharmonia No. 371.

Modern composers, it has frequently been remarked, are turning in increasing numbers to chamber music, writing their compositions for smaller combinations of instruments perhaps in the hope that they will stand a better chance of being performed. Likewise, the recording companies, maybe because it is less expensive, have lately shown a tendency to give more diligent attention to chamber music than heretofore, as a glance at recent issues of *Disques* will show. In the past few months we have had a number of unfamiliar trios, quintets, and other works written for small groups of instruments. With this tendency none, we take it, will quarrel, for it is a commonplace that chamber music adapts itself exceedingly well to the phonograph; and in addition there is a vast literature of such music that deserves to be explored with some degree of thoroughness.

Beethoven, who is also represented in this issue with recordings of his Fifth Symphony, *Leonore* Overture No. 3 and *Waldstein* Sonata (reviewed in their proper places), is given attention with this ably produced recording of his Septet in E Flat, for violin, viola, 'cello, string bass, clarinet, horn and bassoon. The Septet, composed before 1800, has always enjoyed a considerable popularity, and indeed, unlike so many works that, at first damned, are subsequently acclaimed as masterpieces, it was well-liked by the public at the very first performance. Theodore Thomas, in his "Talks About Beethoven's Symphonies" (reviewed under Books this month), terms it the "connecting link between the lesser and greater forms of his [Beethoven's] compositions. Meaning here by the word 'greater' those written for large bodies of performers."

"Hitherto," Thomas continues, "his instrumental works had been composed either for the piano, or for small groups of strings—trios, quartets, etc. In this class of composition he had already achieved freedom of expression, and although he was very cautious about deviating from the traditions of the earlier masters, we can, nevertheless, see the lightning flash and hear the thunder roll from time to time in these works of his so-called 'first period,' and gain a premonition of what is to follow in his later development.

"The freedom thus achieved in his early chamber compositions found still further expression in the Septet, which, as its name indicates, was written for seven instruments: violin, viola, violoncello, double-bass, clarinet and horn. Its form is a free adaption of the Haydn and Mozart Serenade, and it appears as if Beethoven undertook this enlargement upon his previous chamber works as a sort of intermediate step between them and the orchestral field which, perhaps, his inner consciousness already told him was to become so peculiarly his own. At all events his treatment of the wind instruments in this work, especially the clarinet and horn, might be considered as studies for future orchestral compositions."

In six movements, none of them of excessive length, the work nevertheless seems

too long—at least, interest tends to wane before the finish is in sight. The writing is deft and accomplished, the various instruments are combined and contrasted in odd and unexpected ways, and there are some charming tunes and effects; but the desire to hear the whole thing at one sitting is lacking. Perhaps a couple of movements at a time is the proper method. Thus heard, they give much pleasure.



It goes without saying, of course, that the performance is masterly. The Septet has been recorded before, but never so felicitously as here. The recording, smooth, clear, accurately balanced, is superlatively done. For this reason alone the set would be well worth investigating.

REGER
PD-90170
IMPORTED

QUINTET IN A MAJOR: *Scherzo*, Op. 146. Two sides.
Wendling String Quartet and Philip Dreisbach (Clarinet).
One 10-inch disc. \$1.25.

Miniature Score: Eulenburg No. 322.

Very little of Max Reger's output has been recorded, and that little contains nothing of much consequence. The dullness, heaviness and sterility of his other recordings are happily missing from this *Scherzo* from his Quintet in A Major for string quartet and clarinet. Expansive, enjoyable music, it is delightfully written, the clarinet and strings blending effectively and producing some charming moments. The performers play competently, and the recording is all that could be desired.

BERLIOZ
D-TF139
IMPORTED

L'ENFANCE DU CHRIST: *Trio des jeunes Ishmaelites*. Two sides. Lily Laskine (Harp), Marcel Moyse (Flute) and Albert Manouvrier (Flute).
One 12-inch disc. \$1.50.

The *Childhood of Christ*, Berlioz' sole attempt at oratorio, consists of three parts: *Herod's Dream*, *The Flight into Egypt*, and *The Coming to Saïs*. The excerpt recorded here, a Serenade for harp and two flutes, occurs in the third part. Joseph, Mary and the child Jesus, exhausted after a three days' journey, seek shelter in the city of Saïs. They are repulsed by the Romans, but a family of Ishmaelites receives them cordially. After preparations have been made for the guests' comfort, the father of the family orders that harp and flute music be played, so that the "melody cheer them" and "gently entice them to slumber." Three young Ishmaelites then render the Serenade. It is subdued, gentle music, well-played by the three excellent artists Decca has gathered together for the recording. The coarse reproduction, however, is less satisfactory.

BEETHOVEN
V-7360
to
V-7362

SONATA in D Major, Op. 12, No. 1. (Beethoven) Five sides
and
SONATA in C Major: *Andante sostenuto* (K. 296). (Mozart)
One side. Yehudi Menuhin (Violin) and Herbert Giesen
(Piano). Three 12-inch discs in album. Victor Set M-91. \$6.50.

The youthful freshness and buoyancy of this Sonata make it ideal recording material for young Yehudi Menuhin, who gives here one of his finest phonographic performances. The set, which was reviewed on page 270 of the September, 1930, issue, when it appeared in the imported pressings, is well recorded.



PIANO

BEETHOVEN

V-D1983

to

V-D1985

IMPORTED

SONATA in G Major (*Waldstein*), Op. 53. Five sides and
SONATA in E Flat: *Scherzo and Allegro vivace*, Op. 31, No. 3.
One side. Frederic Lamond (Piano).
Three 12-inch discs. \$2 each.

MENDELSSOHN

C-DB454

to

C-DB457

IMPORTED

SONGS WITHOUT WORDS: (1) *Hunting Song*, Op. 19b, No. 3; (2) *Venetian Gondola Song* No. 1, Op. 19b, No. 6; *The Joyous Peasant*, Op. 102, No. 5; *Venetian Gondola Song* No. 2, Op. 30, No. 6; *Lost Happiness*, Op. 38, No. 2; *Duetto*, Op. 38, No. 6; *The Fleecy Cloud*, Op. 53, No. 2; *Sadness of Soul*, Op. 53, No. 4; *Lost Illusion*, Op. 67, No. 2. Eight sides. Ignaz Friedman (Piano). Four 10-inch discs in album. \$4.

Frederic Lamond's recordings of the Beethoven piano sonatas—more properly, of some of the Beethoven piano sonatas,—which appear, from time to time, on the H. M. V. supplements, have nearly all formed distinguished contributions to recorded piano music. H. M. V. and Victor piano recording has improved noticeably of late, and in consequence Lamond's more recent releases have been benefitted accordingly. The *Waldstein* which he renders here reveals much finer recording than his previous releases, and it may, in fact, be accounted his salient phonographic achievement thus far.

The *Waldstein*, of course, can be interpreted in various ways, and so its meaning had best be left to the individual to figure out for himself, if reading meanings into music be one of his pastimes. It is, in any case, a magnificent piece of pianoforte music, impressive, majestic, full of unutterable mysteries and beauties. There is much to admire in Lamond's firm, sure touch, in his well-considered and balanced interpretation. More the scholar than the fiery, temperamental artist, his Beethoven is accordingly solid and substantial, yet there are sufficient lightness and grace to eliminate any suggestion of heaviness.

All in all, then, a highly creditable achievement, both for the artist and the recorders. The piano tone comes through with the authentic ring, and the balance and clarity are at all times admirable. The *Scherzo and Allegro vivace* from the Sonata in E Flat, Op. 31, No. 3, used to fill out the set, is similarly well-played and recorded.

The nine *Songs Without Words* included in the Friedman album are a pleasant, nicely contrasted group, and it is encouraging to note that such hackneyed numbers as the *Spring Song* are omitted to make room for lesser known examples. Musical reflections of passing moods and emotions aroused by some scene or event, these miniatures, though slight in content and fairly easy of execution, are graceful and poetic, eminently enjoyable to listen to. Mendelssohn may not have been a strikingly great man, but he was an immensely intelligent, highly cultivated and sensitive one, and so his reactions to the ordinary events of life were distinguished by many novel,

unexpected and arresting turns of thought. He was in addition a talented composer, so that the form in which he put these reactions was an effective one. The *Songs Without Words*, in fine, typify Mendelssohn the man almost perfectly.



Friedman's rendition is adequate but hardly outstanding. It lacks warmth, and the grace and poetry that give these little pieces their singular charm are missing. The recording is very good. Some of the titles given these pieces, incidentally, are not to be found in the published editions.

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| BRAHMS
REGER
B-15222 | { | ROMANCE. (Brahms) One side and
(a) MARIA WIEGENLIED. (b) HUMORESQUE. (Reger)
One side. Edward Goll (Piano).
One 10-inch disc. \$1.50. |
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This is the first record from Goll in some months. It is a very good one, and the recording is clean-cut and plausibly balanced. The Brahms Romance is pleasant music, deftly played, but the Reger numbers are quite dull.

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| DEBUSSY
O-166.362
<small>IMPORTED</small> | { | SUITE BERGAMASQUE: <i>Menuet</i> . Two sides. Marius-François Gaillard (Piano).
One 10-inch disc. \$1.25. |
|--|---|--|

This appears to be a first recording. Marius-François Gaillard's discs haven't been so good as perhaps they should have been, for which the careless recording was no doubt largely responsible. The reproduction here is somewhat better than that in his previous releases and gives a good idea of the artist's interpretation, which is an assured, well-planned one. Inasmuch as it is the only available recording of the piece, admirers of Debussy's music will find the disc a desirable item to add to their collection.

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| CHOPIN
V-7333
to
V-7336 | { | FOUR BALLADES: <i>G Minor, Op. 23; F Major, Op. 38; A Flat Major, Op. 47; F. Minor, Op. 52</i> . Eight sides. Alfred Cortot (Piano).
Four 12-inch discs in album. Victor Set M-94. \$8. |
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|----------------------------|---|---|
| C-67948D
to
C-67951D | { | MAZURKAS: <i>Op. 7, Nos. 1, 2, 3; Op. 24, No. 4; Op. 33, Nos. 2, 4; Op. 41, No. 1; Op. 50, No. 2; Op. 63, No. 2; Op. 67, Nos. 3, 4; Op. 68, No. 2</i> . Eight sides. Ignaz Friedman (Piano).
Four 12-inch discs in album. Columbia Set No. 159. \$6. |
|----------------------------|---|---|

With the Four Ballades and twelve of the Mazurkas issued domestically, Chopin receives more than usual attention this month. Both of these albums have been reviewed in *Disques* from the imported pressings, the Ballades on page 94 of the May, 1930, issue, and the Mazurkas on page 175 of the June, 1931, issue. Both sets are well-recorded, but most people will find Cortot's playing far more satisfying than Friedman's.



MASSENET

C-LFX151

to

C-LFX165

IMPORTED

OPERA

WERTHER: *Lyric Drama in Four Acts*. Thirty sides. French Operatic Artists and Symphony Orchestra conducted by Elie Cohen. Fifteen 12-inch discs in album. \$30.

THE CAST

Werther.....	Georges Thill (Tenor)
Albert.....	Marcel Rogue (Baritone)
The Bailiff.....	A. Narçon (Bass)
Schmidt.....	H. Niel (Tenor)
Johann.....	L. Guenoet (Bass)
Charlotte.....	Ninon Vallin (Mezzo-Soprano)
Sophie.....	G. Feraldy (Soprano)

Whatever else one may say about Massenet's *Werther*, it must be admitted that the opera lends itself to recording purposes uncommonly well. So neatly do the various numbers adapt themselves to the discs, indeed, that one suspects that Massenet could scarcely have done better had he written the work especially for the phonograph. One of the principal reasons for this, of course, is that the story of *Werther* is an essentially simple one, free from complicated situations that are rendered obscure when the stage action is absent, and lacking in lavish spectacles whose omission detracts from the effectiveness of the work. Easy to follow, there is thus nothing in the plot to stand between the hearer and the music. Werther loves Charlotte, who has already promised to marry Albert, whom she respects but does not love. Fulfilling her promise, she only succeeds in making herself, Werther and her husband profoundly miserable. In the end, appalled by the hopelessness of the situation, Werther shoots himself, dying in Charlotte's arms, while outside the merry crowd, ignorant of the tragedy, celebrates Christmas Eve. It can thus readily be seen that a plot so bald of detail is ideally suited for the phonograph, where everything must be heard and nothing seen.

Based on Goethe's story of his own life, *The Sorrows of Werther*, the libretto was prepared by Edouard Blau, Paul Milliet and George Hartman. The first performance occurred in Vienna, under the composer's direction, in 1892. Massenet's score is infinitely polished and carefully prepared; every effect is shrewdly and assiduously calculated, and there are no rough corners, no unfinished edges. When the action calls for sad music, he promptly responds with a tune reeking with melancholy; when something more joyous is demanded, he responds accordingly. The final effect is similar to that of one of the better sentimental movies. Were Massenet alive today, one suspects that he would be preparing admirable scores for the films. His music is all on the surface; too superficial and far removed from reality to move the emotions at all profoundly, it gently prods and stirs them—at its best, that is; at its worst, one simply squirms and grows impatient at such mawkish drivel. But *Werther* represents Massenet at his best, and it consequently makes very agreeable and easy, if not deeply impressive, listening.



The performance here is a superlative one, smoothly and well carried out in every minute detail. Germany and Italy have heretofore been the principal sources of the best complete operatic recordings. But the recently issued *Faust* and this *Werther* substantially repair France's reputation, sadly diminished by the two mediocre *Carmen* sets, for complete operatic recordings. So far as the performance and recording are concerned, they equal the finest that other countries have produced.

The fact that the admirable Georges Thill appears here as Werther adds special significance to the set. Thill's superb voice is not unfamiliar to collectors, but it has never been heard to better advantage than in this recording. His conception of the melancholy and brooding Werther, intolerably harassed by brutal realities, at no time descends to the merely absurd; it is always credible and plausible, which reflects the highest praise upon his histrionic ability, for there is abundant opportunity in this rôle for the sentimentalist to shine gaudily. The rôle of Charlotte is convincingly portrayed by Ninon Vallin, whose fine voice is well displayed in these records. Mlle. Feraldy as Sophie and Marcel Rogue as Albert also should be commended for their judicious handling of their parts. The other members of the cast perform their duties with assurance and competence, and the orchestra, under Elie Cohen, plays brilliantly. The cuts are negligible.

The recording is consistently clear and well-balanced, achieving a high degree of realism. There are moments, in fact, when only the—not always particularly edifying—spectacle of the stage and audience is needed to complete the illusion of the opera house. Admirers of Massenet's music need have no hesitation in adding this set to their collections.

SULLIVAN { H.M.S. PINAFORE: *Vocal Gems*. Two sides. Columbia Light
C-50299D { Opera Company. One 12-inch disc. \$1.25.

Those who haven't invested in the complete recording of *Pinafore* and yet want the work represented in their libraries will find some of the best numbers capably sung and recorded here. The selections included are: *We Sail the Ocean Blue*, *Sorry Her Lot*, *The First Lord's Song*, *Fair Moon To Thee I Sing*, *He Is an Englishman*, *Captain of the Pinafore*, and *Little Buttercup*. The soloists, whose names are not given on the labels, are only fair, but the chorus sings spiritedly, and a competent orchestra adds to the attractiveness of the disc.

VERDI { ERNANI: *O sommo Carlo*. One side and
C-50300D { RIGOLETTO: *Cortigiani, vil razza dannata*. One side. Ric-
cardo Stracciari (Baritone) with orchestra.
One 12-inch disc. \$1.25.

There are plenty of recordings of these numbers. Here they are sung moderately well, and the recording is adequate. The singer indulges himself in a few violent sobs that are none too pleasant to listen to. A chorus and orchestra render him effective assistance.

COLUMBIA MASTERWORKS*

—New Issues—

CHOPIN: MAZURKAS. The Columbia Masterworks Album issue this month is one that will be roundly welcomed by the innumerable Chopin enthusiasts as well as a great army of lovers of the piano and music of the romantic school in general. The mazurka, a national dance of Poland, is a musical form in which Chopin, greatest of musical Poles, was particularly happy.



These twelve mazurkas, selected from the more than forty written by Chopin, may be counted among the finest and most national music the Polish master ever wrote. They represent all manner of moods—grave and gay, thoughtful and abandoned—each has some turn or curve of phrase, some dexterity of rhythm, some unexpected melody that distinguishes it from all the others; the collection as a whole presents a never-failing beauty. With an artist such as Friedman at the keyboard, it is scarcely necessary to say that all are played faultlessly.

Columbia Masterworks Set No. 159

Chopin: Mazurkas: Opp. 7, Nos. 1, 2, 3; 24, No. 4; 33, Nos. 2, 4; 41, No. 1; 50, No. 2; 63, No. 3; 67, Nos. 3, 4; 68, No. 2 — for Pianoforte. By Ignaz Friedman. Four twelve-inch Records, \$6.00 with album.

ROUSSEL: LE FESTIN DE L'ARAIGNÉE. Albert Roussel is well known among the disciples of modernism in music as one of the great tone poets of the contemporary French school. The Dictionary of Modern Music and Musicians* says of him, in part, (He) "began to devote himself to music at 25; was formerly a naval officer and came to recognize his true vocation under Eastern skies. From them he brought back, like Baudelaire, a passion for the sea and sunlit lands, which pervades his music . . . Roussel is a poet. He seizes the multiple and mysterious echoes which nature evokes in the human soul and clothes them in the magic of music."

His short tone-poem, The Spider's Feast, is one of the most individual of his works and is full of sensuous charm, portraying the secret life of the garden, where the minute creatures of the insect world forever live on each other. This is really an extraordinary work, and a record issue of first-rate musical importance.

Columbia Records No. 67952D and 67953D

Roussel: Le Festin de L'Araignée (The Spider's Feast) Ballet-Pantomime for Orchestra. In 4 Parts. By Walther Straram and Orchestre des Concerts Straram. Two twelve-inch Records. Each, \$1.50.



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"Magic Notes"

**GRÉTRY
AUBER**

PD-566042
IMPORTED

RICHARD CŒUR DE LION: *Grand Duo*. (Grétry) One side and

LA MUETTE DE PORTICI: *Grand Air de la Patrie*. (Auber) One side. Franz Kaisin (Tenor) and José Beckmans (Bari- tone) with orchestra conducted by Albert Wolff. One 12-inch disc. \$1.50.



**RABAUD
MASSENET**

C-RF23
IMPORTED

MAROUF: Act IV—*Marouf, il n'est pas de richesse*. (Rabaud) One side and

SAPHO: Act IV—*Pendant un an, je fus ta femme*. (Massenet) One side. Marthe Nespoulous (Soprano) with orchestra. One 10-inch disc. \$1.50.

SAINT-SAËNS

V-C2047
IMPORTED

SAMSON AND DELILAH: (a) *Love, Come to My Aid*; (b) *Softly Awakes My Heart*. Two sides. Marion Anderson (Con- tralto) with orchestra conducted by Lawrence Collingwood. One 12-inch disc. \$1.75.

The Grétry number, presenting music that is not familiar to many of us, is chiefly interesting because of its freshness. *Richard Cœur de Lion* is generally accounted one of his finest works; nearly every number, Grove's makes bold to say, is worthy of serious study. The *Grand Duo* given here is a simple and unadorned little melody, exceedingly pleasant to listen to, and the two artists singing it give an admirable account of themselves. There is an orchestral accompaniment, but it is quite weak and thin. That, however, is not the fault of Albert Wolff nor of the recording. Blame for that can be rested upon Grétry, whose lack of technical knowledge and ignorance of orchestration often caused his accompaniments to lack effectiveness and color. . . . On the reverse side a fiery number from Auber's the *Dumb Girl of Portici*, the Overture to which was reviewed on page 410 of the December issue, is presented with great vigor by the same artists. Here M. Wolff's orchestra is heard to excellent advantage.

A record of several selections from Henri Rabaud's opera, *Marouf*, sung by Georges Thill, who recently made his Metropolitan Opera début, was reviewed in the November issue. This disc is interesting mainly because of the very fine singing by Marthe Nespoulous. Hers is a lovely voice, and it ought to be heard more frequently on records. What would ordinarily be a dull piece of music becomes here extremely enjoyable. In the *Sapho* number her singing is even more attractive, and she wisely refrains from trying to extract all the sweetness the music holds. *Sapho*, produced at the Opéra-Comique in Paris in 1897, has been rather overlooked—does anyone greatly care?—by the recording companies. This well-recorded and capitably sung disc should suffice for most people.

All the fine qualities of the Negro voice at its best are to be found in Marion Anderson's expressive contralto. This gifted colored artist, though an American, is now recording in Europe. Singing in English, she presents two very familiar numbers from *Samson and Delilah*. In neither is she at her best. Lawrence Col- lingwood provides a good orchestral accompaniment, and the disc is well-recorded.

Recent Victor Releases

MUSICAL MASTERPIECE

The Chopin Ballades. Played by Alfred Cortot on four double-faced 12-inch Victor Records Nos. 7333-7336. In automatic sequence Nos. 7337-7340, in Album M-94 with explanatory booklet. List price, \$8.00.

This album, which contains all four of the Chopin Ballades, will prove a source of real joy to the lover of piano music . . . especially if he is partial to the music of Chopin! Too often artists cater to popular favor, with the result that one hears repeatedly the G Minor, opus 23, and the A Flat Major, opus 47; while the wistful beauties of the F Major, opus 38 and the F Minor, opus 52 remain neglected. With these splendid recordings such a situation is overcome. Here they are, all four, magnificently interpreted . . . brilliantly executed . . . superbly recorded.

CONCERT SERIES

Strauss Waltzes. Played by the Berlin State Opera Orchestra conducted by Dr. Leo Blech; the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Clemens Krauss and Erich Kleiber on five double-faced 12-inch Victor Records Nos. 9990-9994. And in automatic sequence Nos. 9995-9999, in Album C-15. List price, \$7.50.

Time cannot wither nor custom stale the appeal of a Strauss waltz. The music to which the pleasure-loving Viennese responded so heartily years ago, continues to entertain today. This Album of five records contains the popular Artists' Life, Thousand and One Nights, My Darling Waltz (from the operetta, *Gypsy Baron*) Reminiscences of Vienna, a delightful potpourri, and Village Swallows—the latter by Joseph Strauss, brother of Johann the younger. Such conductors as those who direct these recordings, assure just the right Viennese atmosphere.

RED SEAL RECORDS

Francesca da Rimini (Tchaikowsky).

Played by the London Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Albert Coates. On two double-faced 12-inch Victor Records Nos. 11091-11092. List price, \$1.50 each.

Trees and

Home on the Range. Sung, with orchestral accompaniment, by John Charles Thomas, on Victor Record No. 1525. List price, \$1.50.

Chanson Indoue (from "Sadko") and

Les Filles de Cadix. Sung, with orchestral accompaniment, by Mme. Amelita Galli-Curci, on Victor Record No. 1524. List price, \$1.50.

Musica Proibita and

Mamma mia, che rò sapè. Sung, with orchestral accompaniment, by Beniamino Gigli, on Victor Record No. 7400. List price, \$2.00.



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VOCAL



WAGNER
B-90178

{ TRÄUME. One side and
SCHMERZEN. (Wagner-Mottl) One side. Elisabeth Ohms
(Soprano) with orchestra. One 12-inch disc. \$1.50.

Both singing and recording are adequate, if not outstanding. Julius Prüwer conducts the orchestral accompaniment for *Träume*, Manfred Gurlitt that for *Schmerzen*. The disc was reviewed, from the imported Polydor pressing, in the June, 1930, issue on page 147.

**GATTY
TRADI-
TIONAL**
C-2480D

{ BENDEMEER'S STREAM. (Gatty) One side
WOULD GOD I WERE THE TENDER APPLE BLOS-
SOM. (arr. Fisher) One side. Anna Case (Soprano) with
piano accompaniment by Carroll Hollister.
One 10-inch disc. 75c.

Anna Case's occasional releases always lend distinction to the Columbia lists, for her voice records extraordinarily well. The words to *Bendemeer's Stream* are by Thomas Moore. *Would God I Were the Tender Apple Blossom* is more familiarly known as the *Londonderry Air*. Both are delightfully sung, well recorded, and to each Carroll Hollister provides an effective piano accompaniment.

**RIMSKY-
KORSAKOW**
DELIBES
V-1524

{ CHANSON INDOUE. (Rimsky-Korsakow) One side and
LES FILLES DE CADIX. (Delibes) One side. Amelita Galli-
Curci (Soprano) with orchestra. One 10-inch disc. \$1.50.

GASTALDON
NUTILE
V-7400

{ MUSICA PROIBITA. (Flick-Flock-S. Gastaldon) One side and
MAMMA MIA, CHE VÒ SAPÈ. (F. Russo-Emmanuel Nutile)
One side. Beniamino Gigli (Tenor) with orchestra.
One 12-inch disc. \$2.

RASBACH
GUION
V-1525

{ TREES. (Joyce Kilmer-Oscar Rasbach) One side and
HOME ON THE RANGE (*Texas Cowboy Song*). (David
W. Guion) One side. John Charles Thomas (Baritone) with
orchestra. One 10-inch disc. \$1.50.

All of these discs are ably recorded and well-sung, yet none affords any genuine satisfaction. Galli-Curci gives a smooth, tasteful rendition of the *Song of India*, but the piece has been over-worked so much that little of its charm remains. The Delibes number, a gay and lively piece, is sung with the proper verve. The orchestral accompaniment is very good. . . . Stanislaio Gastaldon's fame rests principally on his ballad, *La musica proibita*, which Gigli sings here. The song is said to have sold over 200,000 copies. Hearing it, one wonders why. As for the reverse side, it is well-sung, but more restraint would have been desirable. . . . The record sung by

Brunswick



RELEASES FOR THE MONTH OF AUGUST

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RICHARD STRAUSS, Conductor | Recorded in Europe
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| 90176 | VINCENT D'INDY—SYMPHONY for Orchestra and Piano
on a French Mountain Air—G Major—Opus 25
FINALE, PARTS 1 and 2
JEANNE-MARIE DARRE, PIANIST and
LAMOUREUX ORCHESTRA, PARIS
ALBERT WOLFF, Conductor | Recorded in Europe
PRICE \$1.50 |
| 90178 | WAGNER—TRÄUME (Dreams)
Orchestra Accompaniment (JULIUS PRÜWER, Conductor)
WAGNER-MOTTL—SCHMERZEN (Pains)
Soprano Solo in German— ELISABETH OHMS
Orchestra Accompaniment (MANFRED GURLITT, Conductor) | Recorded in Europe
PRICE \$1.50 |
| 15221 | FIBICH—POEM
SCHUBERT—Transcribed by Albert Spalding
HARK! HARK! THE LARK
Violin Solo— Mishel Piastro —Pianoforte by Jascha Veissi | PRICE \$1.50 |
| 15222 | REGER—MARIA WIEGENLIED (The Virgin's Slumber Song),
HUMORESQUE
BRAHMS—ROMANCE—Piano Solo, Edward Goll | PRICE \$1.50 |

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John Charles Thomas seems to be his first for Victor. Joyce Kilmer's poem *Trees*, set to music by Oscar Rasbach, is now being shouted through the jazz-band megaphones, which somehow seems odd. Thomas sings it with a sort of ponderous sentimentality that is none too delightful. The Texas cowboy song, on the reverse side, is a dreary piece, mawkishly rendered. The recording in both numbers is excellent.

ORGAN



- BUXTEHUDE** { PRELUDE AND FUGUE in *G Minor*. Two sides. Alfred
B-90177 { Sittard (Organ).
One 12-inch disc. \$1.50.

Dietrich Buxtehude (1637-1707) is another of those composers to whom the recording companies have not yet rendered sufficient justice. Indeed, this disc, in the imported Polydor pressing, is the only work of Buxtehude's listed in the Gramophone Shop's comprehensive *Encyclopedia*. Sittard's discs are always powerfully recorded, and this one is no exception. There is tremendous volume, but it is well distributed, and the clearness of the recording is noteworthy. A robust, solid piece of music, it is impressively played.

VIOLIN



- FIBICH** { POEM (Fibich) One side and
SCHUBERT { HARK! HARK! THE LARK. (Schubert-Spalding) One side.
B-15221 { Mishel Piastro (Violin) with piano accompaniment by Jascha
Veissi. One 10-inch disc. \$1.50.

Mishel Piastro is the new concertmaster of the New York Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra. Before receiving this appointment he occupied a similar position with the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra. The disc is brilliantly and powerfully recorded, excessively so for most ears, and neither of the pieces calls for comment.

- FALLA** { SPANISH DANCE. (Falla-Kreisler) One side and
SUK { UN POCO TRISTE, Op. 17. (Suk) One side. Edith Lorand
C-G50298D { (Violin) and Michael Raucheisen (Piano).
One 12-inch disc. \$1.25.

Edith Lorand, who is much to be preferred with her orchestra than with the piano, fiddles a bit clumsily in both of these numbers. The Falla piece has been recorded before by other and better violinists, and the Suk *Un poco triste*, though prettily tuneful, offers nothing of any consequence. Michael Raucheisen, who provides the piano accompaniments to Kreisler's European recordings, supplies excellent support.

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CHORAL



PASCHENKO
C-50295D

IN THE FOREST. (Paschenko) One side and
PLATOFF'S SONG (*Old Cossack Song*). One side. Don Cos-
sacks Choir conducted by Serge Jaroff.
One 12-inch disc. \$1.25.

The Don Cossacks Choir, having pleasurably excited their audiences during their recent American appearances, have been persuaded to return to this country next season. Columbia has issued several of the choir's records. This latest one, by no means so good as some of the former releases, still is interesting, and contains all the curious yawps, howls and whistling that this organization employs with such rousing effect. The recording is passably good.

**TSCHAI-
KOWSKY
NOBEL**
V-22709

HOW BLEST ARE THEY. (Tschaikowsky) One side and
THE SOULS OF THE RIGHTEOUS, Op. 8, No. 1. (T.
Tertius Noble) One side. St. Bartholomew's Choir conducted
by David McK. Williams. One 10-inch disc. 75c.

Last month, in the review of two hymns sung by this superb choir, the extraordinary realism and clarity of the recording were noted. The same qualities are evident in this disc. Both numbers are beautifully sung, and the record should interest all those who like choir singing.

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CORRESPONDENCE



Urges More Decorum

Editor, *Disques*:

It is very rarely that I have any fault to find with your magazine, *Disques*, but the first paragraph of the review of Enesco's *Roumanian Rhapsody* (July number, page 217) has offended and displeased me, doubtless not alone among your readers, very much. Totally aside from the question of Prohibition, which your reviewer has unwarrantedly introduced and treated with a levity and from a viewpoint which would be approved of by very few persons outside of the Northeastern states, it seems to me that the attitude of mind and the temper of treatment in the article is one which is much more suited to the *New Yorker* or *Judge* than to *Disques*. For example, the reference to hearing music as deserving to be a "bawdy experience" is more than objectionable to readers who want serious and reasonably sane criticisms of music, and not the blasé cynicisms of megalopolitan *petits-mâtres*. I might suggest, therefore, that you request your reviewer to confine his attention to the records he is supposed to be considering; else you may end up with one less subscriber on your lists.

ROBERT A. HALL, JR.

N. Waterboro, Maine.

Duplications

Editor, *Disques*:

It is only recently that I have come across your excellent publication and I find it so interesting that I have instructed Messrs. Rimington Van Wyck Ltd. of this city to reserve me a copy each month.

The question of duplications has been argued hotly in Mr. Compton Mackenzie's magazine *The Gramophone* but your contributor to your issue of June, Mr. Magruder, raises points in their favor with which, in all deference, I disagree. He says: "So long as the manufacturers and dealers don't object (to duplications) it is difficult to understand why collectors should." But it is the collectors who buy and surely the more the factories are occupied with duplications the less space they have for making more original issues, which collectors would buy in prefer-

ence. As an example of this, the Decca Company have recently issued *Capriol Suite* by Peter Warlock and I am assured that it is a "best seller" as was *Rio Grande* by Constant Lambert recorded a year ago by Columbia. If, in place of these, duplications of another work had been issued, would the sales have been as large, would collectors have rushed to buy and would dealers have done such big business? I doubt it.

Mr. Magruder suggests that one advantage of duplications is that the performance of a particular work can be varied by being played on different sets of records. Quite true, but he is a rich man who can afford more than one version of a Masterwork and then, will he vary the performance in this way? Out of a collection of about 400 records, I have a few (very few) duplications and my experience is that in each case one version definitely pleases me more than the other and that I never play the other in consequence.

Admittedly, if one company issues a symphony which sells well, another company issues a set of the same work so as to have "a finger in the pie"—such a procedure is natural. But duplications of the same work by the same company does seem a waste of time and material. The only justification for duplication from a collector's point of view seems to me to be the healthy competition it involves between the various recording companies, both as regards quality of manufacture and price, which is as it should be.

In a recent editorial you complain that in comparison with Europeans so few American composers had their works recorded. In connection with this, the following may be of interest. I was complaining to a dealer that so few modern British composers had their works recorded—"For instance," I said, "why can't one of the companies issue Arnold Bax's Symphony No. 3 which always draws an appreciative audience at concerts?" "Oh!" was the reply, "they haven't any enterprise. No! The only hope of a work like that being recorded is if the Boston Symphony Orchestra do it for the Victor Company when, of course, we can always import it for you!" To this, I will make no comment in view of your recent remarks.

ARTHUR H. VILLIERS

London, England.

Correspondence

Comments and Suggestions

Editor, *Disques*:

Month after month, as new issues of *Disques* appear, it becomes increasingly difficult to refrain from dashing to the typewriter and rattling off reams of comment; so provocative of thought are your pages. One does not always agree with you, as, for instance, in respect of the causes of the phonograph's present poor social standing. It is more than likely that nothing else has done the record business more harm than the terrible destructiveness of most electric pickups. It is exceedingly discouraging to the "discophile"—(I offer that word to Prof. Goldberg as a legitimate substitute for "gramophone"—I may think of something still better later on, like "phonodiskian" or "phonodisciple" or "discophonist")—to see his investment in fine music reduced to junk in a few playings. Why are those fine oil-damped pickups being withheld from the public, anyway?

Until I read Joseph Cottler on Beethoven I always considered that great composer rather pompous and formal. Now I am coming to consider my early distaste for Beethoven symptomatic of my lack of comprehension. More power to the Joseph Cottlers who take us on these musical sight-seeing tours and show us the things that, left to ourselves, we might never discover!

Reading Professor Goldberg's style of writing resembles the task of taking a child with a bent for plucking flowers from the roadside to the railway station. He plucks pretty posies, but the innumerable digressions into all the related and unrelated arts, sciences and philosophies retard the pace by which the point of the discourse may be reached most promptly. Is he prolix, or do I mistake the nature of all these mental coruscations, this literary arabesque? Is this a case of saying a little on many things for lack of much to say on one thing? Perhaps that is the necessary technique when "modern" music and its perpetrators come in for discussion? If Mr. Cowell bangs on the piano with his elbows and plucks its strings with his fingernails, what of it? Mozart, it is said, banged out part of an "impossible" chord with his nose. In the Y. M. C. A. we slipped a sheet of the New York *American* between the strings and the hammers and dampers of the battered upright and educed some astound-

ing "color" effects. I assure you that we did not use the so-called "funny" sheet, either. As children we twanged a mean pizzicato on bits of piano wire wrapped around cigar boxes. After listening to some of Roger-Ducasse, for example, I think we were thirty years ahead of our time.

However, all of that is academic. I am personally more concerned with seeing that interest in recorded music does not die out than I am, at the moment, in whether a record can play three, five or fifteen minutes. That is a minor matter except to the hypercritical who, fortunately, constitute a very small percentage of the phonograph enthusiasts. I do believe that the record business would thrive if the enthusiasm of its recent patrons could be maintained. Under those conditions it might even spread to people whose interest in recorded music is at present dormant. But what can be the future of an industry which is not only unwilling to propagandize in behalf of its own interests, but actually destroys the business it now has by offering its customers records that are frequently off-center, records that do not stand up (sometimes for even one playing!), and pickups that ruin records in no time at all? *Why* do they withhold from the general public those pickups which are known to be practically non-destructive? Are the interests which control the world of radio, records, entertainment and communication actually bent on adroitly bringing about the "natural" demise of all forms of competitive distraction so that we shall all be forced of necessity to pay attention to the "entertainment" which nets them not thousands a month, but thousands an hour,—and possibly additional thousands when they can finally demonstrate to the world of commerce that their diffusion of "entertainment" is practically without competition of *any* kind, that "coverage" is "100%?"

I make an appeal to the record-loving public to buy records *now*, a little beyond the bounds of what we call "prudence." Forego something else, if necessary, but by all means deprive the trade of any reason whatever for seriously contemplating a shut-down as far as the manufacture of records and reproducing apparatus may be concerned.

A. J. FRANCK

Richmond Hill, N. Y.

BOOKS

TALKS ABOUT BEETHOVEN'S SYMPHONIES. By Theodore Thomas and Frederick Stock. Boston: *Oliver Ditson Company*. \$2.50.

It is always instructive to find out what a great conductor thinks of the music he plays. When he plays something particularly well, the logical assumption—which is not, of course, always correct—is that the composition pleases him very much, and one is naturally curious to know why. Plenty of conductors are only too eager to explain why, but not all of them are capable of putting their reasons into clear, lucid, intelligible English, and so their bizarre and often hopelessly obscure explanations are of little practical value. Persons sufficiently musical may be shrewd enough to discover from the conductor's interpretation precisely what it is in the composition that appeals to him so strongly, but the average music lover, ignorant of technical details and bewildered by the conductor's meaningless literary debauch, has to content himself with more or less unsatisfactory guesses. That is, unless the conductor publishes a book so clearly written as this one on the Beethoven symphonies. The style in which it is written is surely not distinguished, but it at least has the virtue of clarity, and that, in a volume of this character, is the essential thing.

That Theodore Thomas' success as a conductor was based on a sound, penetrating knowledge of the music he played is abundantly demonstrated in these "Talks About Beethoven's Symphonies." Many of his ideas are debatable, and many differ sharply from generally accepted views, but coming from a man who was in almost constant touch with Beethoven's scores, a man who, at his concerts, proved irrefutably that he knew these scores through and through—coming from such a man they obviously deserve the utmost consideration and respect.

The First Symphony he does not consider just a skilful aping of Mozart and Haydn. "It is sometimes said that the First Symphony is Haydn and Mozart rather than Beethoven, but this is not correct. It is Beethoven pure and simple, but Beethoven carrying on the art of his day as it had been

transmitted to him by his predecessors." The Second, while in emotional significance not noticeably superior to the First, shows a marked advance in effectiveness of instrumentation and a great gain in individuality of style. For the *Eroica* he prepares the following program: "First movement: representing the character and great qualities of the Hero; Second movement; funeral rites of the Hero and lamentation of the people; Third movement: an interlude; Fourth movement: public games in honor of the Hero and his final translation into the abode of the immortals." But Thomas cautions his readers against applying his or, for that matter, anybody else's interpretation of the work too strictly, since such conclusions are apt to be forced and unnatural, and besides Beethoven himself did not give "any indications that warrant their adoption in full."

As for the Fourth Symphony: "Speak of imagination—fantasy! Beethoven creates an atmosphere and says more, musically, with a single instrument of percussion than most composers before and after him have been able to express with a whole orchestra!" And the Fifth: "[It] may be considered as a pendant or companion piece to the *Eroica*. I do not mean by this that it is in any sense a sequel to it, but that it is in a related mood; and, being the product of a mature and experienced man, it achieves the unity and perfection which the *Eroica* missed, and presents in its last two movements the culminating triumph lacking in the finale of the earlier work. In the Second and Third Symphonies the culminating point is reached in the second movement. In the Fourth the composer is able to preserve the atmosphere of the work throughout the third movement, but it is not until the Fifth Symphony that the climax comes where it properly belongs—at the end."

The analyses of the last four symphonies are contributed by Frederick Stock. They are carefully done, but in a more technical manner than Thomas employs. All of the analyses are illustrated with useful charts and musical quotations of the important themes. Used in conjunction with the phonograph, the book should provide valuable assistance to the music lover in obtaining an intelligent understanding of the Beethoven symphonies.

